



BOYS' STORIES
from
DICKENS



Oliver asks Mr. Bumble for more

PAUL CUPNIN



Bob Cratchit takes
Tiny Tim home—



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BOYS FROM DICKENS



A murmur of delight arose all around the board

BOYS FROM DICKENS

RETOLD BY
ELIZABETH LODOR MERCHANT

ILLUSTRATED BY
CLARA M. BURD

THE JOHN C. WINSTON COMPANY
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CONTENTS

	PAGE
AN INTRODUCTORY TALK.....	9
TINY TIM.....	13
POOR JO!.....	22
OLIVER TWIST.....	35
THE FAT BOY.....	67
DAVID COPPERFIELD.....	83

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

A MURMUR OF DELIGHT AROSE ALL AROUND THE BOARD.....	<i>Frontispiece</i>
	PAGE
BOB CRATCHIT TAKES TINY TIM HOME.....	15
POOR JO LOOKS THROUGH THE IRON RAILING AT HIS FRIEND'S GRAVE.....	25
OLIVER ASKS MR. BUMBLE FOR MORE.....	39
THE FAT BOY TAKES ANOTHER NAP.....	69
DAVID COPPERFIELD AND PEGGOTTY SAT CHATTING BY THE PARLOR FIRE.....	84
DAVID COPPERFIELD LEAVES HOME IN THE CARRIER'S CART.....	101

AN INTRODUCTORY TALK

SUPPOSE we invent some moving pictures for ourselves. They shall be a procession of people, chiefly boys, out of the land of make-believe. Each one will stay only a minute or two, leaving us to follow later if we like.

Here's a boy, ragged and forlorn, walking weary miles in the hope of finding a home. For days and days he trudges along toward London. Now we lose him in the crowded, narrow streets of a poor part of that city. As he disappears into a dark house we feel sure that many dangers lie ahead of him. We shall not be surprised to find him in a den of thieves.

What's this on the screen? Is't a boat? But it is on dry land, far up on the seashore where the waves cannot reach it. There's a low door on one side, like a cottage entrance. It stands open so that we may look in. Sure enough! It's an old boat turned into a house. Before the comfortable fireplace stands a big man in the clothes of a fisherman, and in a little seat close to the fire are two children, a girl and a boy. It must be a pleasant place to stay in; everyone looks kind and cheerful.

The next picture is a great contrast. It shows a lonely graveyard, at dusk. A very little boy is look-

10 AN INTRODUCTORY TALK

ing rather sorrowfully at the tombstones, as if they bore the names of some of his people. Suddenly, a rough, desperate-looking man appears out of the shadows and seizes the terrified child. What will become of him, all alone and entirely helpless?

Did you ever see such a fat boy as this next one, who stands knocking at a house door as if he had a message to give? Do look at him! His eyes are shut! He seems to be fast asleep, but his hand keeps on moving. The door opens and a maid stands staring at him; still he's asleep. Would good things to eat interest him enough to keep him awake? If the maid had a plateful of cakes in her hand, perhaps he'd come out of this doze.

We've seen these pieces of stories. Don't you think they are interesting? The entire story in each case would be more so. Instead of unfinished fragments we may see the whole if we step into the make-believe land out of which they walked on the screen of our imagination. That land is created for us in the many books written by Charles Dickens. He was an Englishman who lived and wrote a long time ago, but the people he shows us were like ourselves in their feelings and often in their circumstances.

Among the reasons that people all over the world have liked Dickens so much is that he was always engaged, in one way or another, in trying to make life better and happier for others. He wrote books to show the evil effects of some existing laws and cus-

toms; for instance, he attacked the old usage of putting people into prison for debt. In another book he pictured the cruel abuse of children in some out-of-the-way boarding schools. People were influenced by his books to correct such conditions.

Yet another attraction in Dickens' books is the multitude of children, both boys and girls. Before his time, few authors introduced children in any considerable numbers into their stories. Indeed, even yet no one else has given us so many; nor has anyone else so interwoven their affairs with the fabric of adult stories. *Oliver Twist*, *David Copperfield*, *Paul and Florence Dombey*, *Jenny Wren*, poor *Jo*, the *Fat Boy*, the *Marchioness*, *Little Nell*, *Tiny Tim*—they are known wherever Dickens' books have gone; often they are actually better known than his grown-up characters are.

You want these boys and girls for your friends. The very best way to have that pleasure is to read the entire books, every one of them. However, they are rather long, and there are many of them. When you do read them, your pleasure will be all the greater for knowing some of the characters in advance. Here is a group of them presented as far as possible in Dickens' own words. After each story you will find the name of the book from which it is taken, so that you will know what to ask for when you are ready to read it as a whole. Some of these days perhaps you'll pay a visit to London, and there, in the South

12 AN INTRODUCTORY TALK

Kensington Museum, you may see the actual manuscripts in Dickens' own handwriting, as he sent them to be printed. Fortunately for you and me we can get them all in any library and in any book store, and enjoy them in our own homes. Dickens belongs to you and to me, and to all the world.

—ELIZABETH LODOR MERCHANT

TINY TIM

IT will surprise you all very much to hear that there was once a man who did not like Christmas. In fact, he had been heard on several occasions to use the word *humbug* with regard to it. His name was Scrooge, and he was a hard, sour-tempered man of business, intent only on saving and making money, and caring nothing for anyone. He paid the poor, hard-working clerk in his office as little as he could possibly get the work done for, and lived on as little as possible himself, alone, in two dismal rooms. He was never merry or comfortable or happy, and he hated other people to be so, and that was the reason he hated Christmas, because people *will* be happy at Christmas, you know, if they possibly can, and like to have a little money to make themselves and others comfortable.

Well, it was Christmas eve, a very cold and foggy one, and Mr. Scrooge, having given his poor clerk unwilling permission to spend Christmas day at home, locked up his office and went home himself in a very bad temper, and with a cold in his head. After having taken some gruel, as he sat over a miserable fire in his dismal room, he got into bed and had some wonderful and disagreeable dreams,

to which we will leave him, while we see how Tiny Tim, the son of his poor clerk, spent Christmas day.

The name of this clerk was Bob Cratchit. He had a wife and five other children besides Tim, who was a weak and delicate little cripple, and for this reason was dearly loved by his father and the rest of the family; not but what he was a dear little boy, too, gentle and patient and loving, with a sweet face of his own, which no one could help looking at.

Whenever he could spare the time, it was Mr. Cratchit's delight to carry his little boy out on his shoulder to see the shops and the people; and to-day he had taken him to church for the first time.

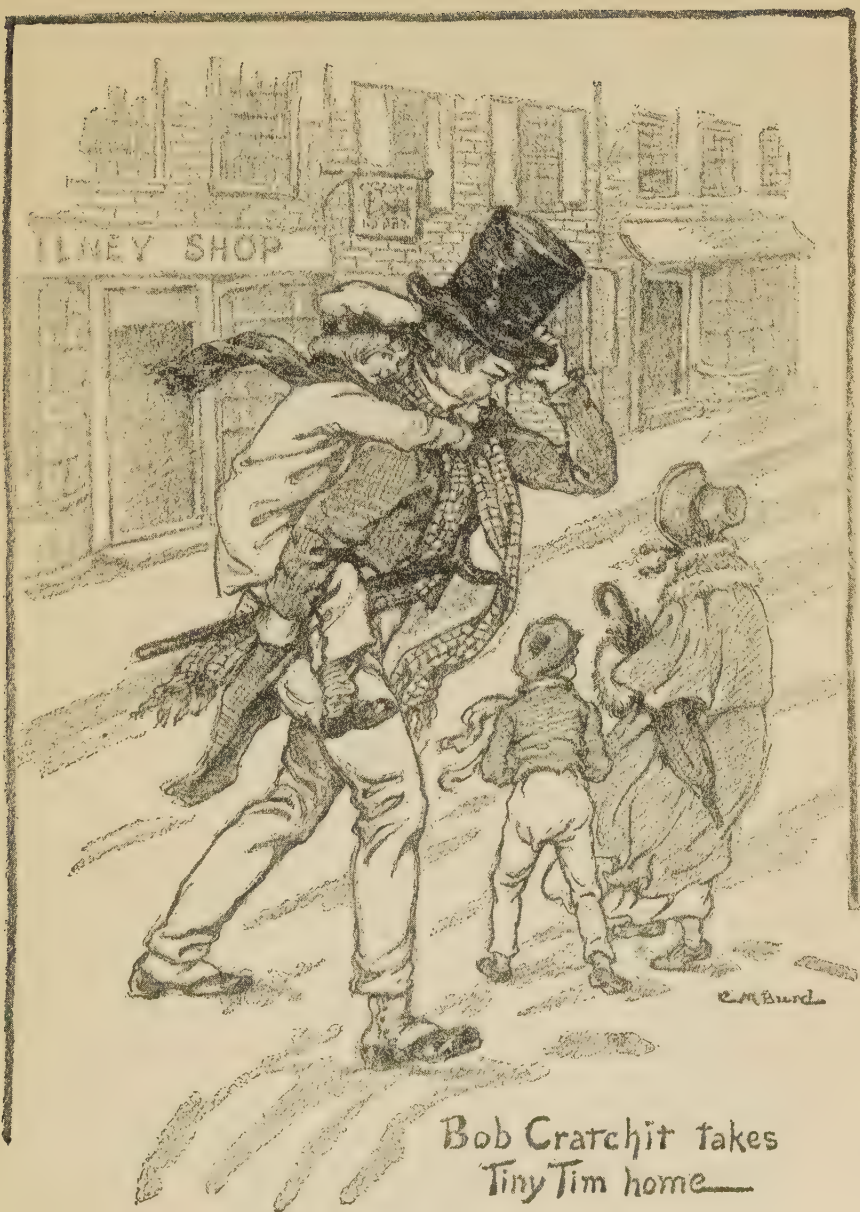
"Whatever has got your precious father and your brother Tiny Tim!" exclaimed Mrs. Cratchit. "Here's dinner all ready to be dished up. I've never known him so late on Christmas day before."

"Here he is, mother!" cried Belinda. "Here he is!" cried the other children.

In came little Bob, the father, with at least three feet of comforter, exclusive of the fringe, hanging down before him; and his threadbare clothes darned up and brushed, to look seasonable; and Tiny Tim upon his shoulder. Alas for Tiny Tim, he bore a little crutch, and had his limbs supported by an iron frame!

"Why, where's our Martha?" cried Bob Cratchit, looking round.

"Not coming," said Mrs. Cratchit.



Bob Cratchit takes
Tiny Tim home—

"Not coming!" said Bob, with a sudden declension in his high spirits; for he had been Tim's blood horse all the way from church, and had come home rampant. "Not coming upon Christmas day!"

Martha didn't like to see him disappointed, if it were only in joke; so she came out prematurely from behind the closet door, and ran into his arms, while the two young Cratchits hustled Tiny Tim, and bore him off into the wash house, that he might hear the pudding singing in the copper.

"And how did Tim behave?" asked Mrs. Cratchit.

"As good as gold and better," replied his father. "I think, wife, the child gets thoughtful, sitting at home so much. He told me, coming home, that he hoped the people in church who saw he was a cripple would be pleased to remember on Christmas day who it was made the lame to walk."

"Bless his sweet heart!" said the mother in a trembling voice, and the father's voice trembled, too, as he remarked that Tiny Tim was growing strong and hearty at last.

His active little crutch was heard upon the floor, and back came Tiny Tim before another word was spoken, escorted by his brother and sister to his stool beside the fire; while Bob, Master Peter, and the two ubiquitous young Cratchits went to fetch the goose, with which they soon returned in high procession.

Such a bustle ensued that you might have thought a goose the rarest of all birds; a feathered phenomenon, to which a black swan was a matter of course—and in truth it was something very like it in that house. Mrs. Cratchit made the gravy (ready beforehand in a little saucepan) hissing hot; Master Peter mashed the potatoes with incredible vigor; Miss Belinda sweetened up the applesauce; Martha dusted the hot plates; Bob took Tiny Tim beside him in a tiny corner at the table; the two young Cratchits set chairs for everybody, not forgetting themselves, and, mounting guard upon their posts, crammed spoons into their mouths, lest they should shriek for goose before their turn came to be helped. At last the dishes were set on, and grace was said. It was succeeded by a breathless pause, as Mrs. Cratchit, looking slowly all along the carving knife, prepared to plunge it in the breast; but when she did, and when the long-expected gush of stuffing issued forth, one murmur of delight arose all round the board, and even Tiny Tim, excited by the two young Cratchits, beat on the table with the handle of his knife, and feebly cried, Hurrah!

There never was such a goose. Bob said he didn't believe there ever was such a goose cooked. Its tenderness and flavor, size and cheapness were the themes of universal admiration. Eked out by applesauce and mashed potatoes, it was a sufficient dinner for the whole family; indeed, as Mrs. Cratchit

said with great delight (surveying one small atom of a bone upon the dish,) they hadn't eaten it all, at that! Yet everyone had had enough, and the youngest Cratchits, in particular, were steeped in sage and onions to the eyebrows! But now, the plates being changed by Miss Belinda, Mrs. Cratchit left the room alone—too nervous to bear witness—to take the pudding up, and bring it in.

Suppose it should not be done enough! Suppose it should break in turning out! Suppose somebody should have gotten over the wall of the back yard and stolen it, while they were merry with the goose—a supposition at which the two young Cratchits became livid! All sorts of horrors were supposed.

Halloo! A great deal of steam! The pudding was out of the copper. A smell like a washing day! That was the cloth. A smell like an eating house and a pastry cook's next door to each other, with a laundress next door to that! That was the pudding! In half a minute Mrs. Cratchit entered—flushed, but smiling proudly—with the pudding like a speckled cannon ball, so hard and firm, blazing in half of half-a-quartern of ignited brandy, and bedight with Christmas holly stuck into the top.

Oh, a wonderful pudding! Bob Cratchit said, and calmly, too, that he regarded it as the greatest success achieved by Mrs. Cratchit since their marriage. Mrs. Cratchit said that now the weight was off her mind, she would confess she had had her

doubts about the quantity of flour. Everybody had something to say about it, but nobody said or thought it was a small pudding for a large family. It would have been flat heresy to do so. Any Cratchit would have blushed to hint at such a thing.

At last the dinner was all done, the cloth was cleared, the hearth swept, and the fire made up. The compound in the jug being tasted, and considered perfect, apples and oranges were put upon the table, and a shovel full of chestnuts on the fire. Then all the Cratchit family drew round the hearth in what Bob Cratchit called a circle, meaning half a one; and at Bob Cratchit's elbow stood the family display of glass—two tumblers and a custard cup without a handle.

These held the hot stuff from the jug, however, as well as golden goblets would have done; and Bob served it out with beaming looks, while the chestnuts on the fire sputtered and cracked noisily. Then Bob proposed:

“A merry Christmas to us all, my dears. God bless us!” Which all the family reëchoed.

“God bless us every one!” said Tiny Tim, the last of all.

Now I told you that Mr. Scrooge had some disagreeable and wonderful dreams on Christmas eve, and so he had. In one of them he dreamed that a Christmas spirit showed him his clerk's home; he saw them all gathered round the fire, and heard

them drink his health, and Tiny Tim's song, and he took special note of Tiny Tim himself.

How Mr. Scrooge spent Christmas day we do not know. He may have remained in bed, having a cold, but on Christmas night he had more dreams, in which the spirit took him again to his clerk's poor home. Seated by the table the mother was doing some needlework; a tear dropped on it now and then, and she said, poor thing, that the work, which was black, hurt her eyes. The children sat, sad and silent, about the room, except Tiny Tim, who was not there. Upstairs the father, with his face hidden in his hands, sat beside a little bed, on which lay a tiny figure, white and still. "My little child, my pretty little child," he sobbed, as the tears fell through his fingers on to the floor. "Tiny Tim died because his father was too poor to give him what was necessary to make him well; *you* kept him poor," said the dream spirit to Mr. Scrooge. The father kissed the cold, little face on the bed and went down stairs, where the sprays of holly still remained about the humble room; and taking his hat, went out, with a wistful glance at the little crutch in the corner as he shut the door. Mr. Scrooge saw all this, and many more things as strange and sad—the spirit took care of that; but, wonderful to relate, he woke the next morning feeling a different man—feeling as he had never felt in his life before.

“Why, I am as light as a feather, and as happy as an angel, and as merry as a schoolboy,” he said to himself as he absolutely skipped into the next room to breakfast and threw on all the coal at once, and put two lumps of sugar in his tea. “I hope everybody had a merry Christmas, and here’s a happy New Year to all the world.”

Poor Bob Cratchit crept into the office a few minutes late, expecting to be roundly abused and scolded for it, but no such thing. His master was there with his back to a good fire, and actually smiling; and he shook hands with his clerk, telling him heartily that he was going to raise his salary, and asking quite affectionately after Tiny Tim! “And mind you make up a good fire in your room before you set to work, Bob,” he said, as he closed his own door.

Bob could hardly believe his eyes and ears, but it was all true. Such doings as they had on New Year’s day had never been seen before in the Cratchits’ home, nor such a turkey as Mr. Scrooge sent them for dinner. Tiny Tim had his share, too, for Tiny Tim did not die, not a bit of it. Mr. Scrooge was a second father to him from that day; he wanted for nothing, and grew up strong and hearty. Mr. Scrooge loved him, and well he might; for was it not Tiny Tim who had unconsciously, through the Christmas dream spirit, touched his hard heart and caused him to become a good and happy man?

POOR JO!

JO was a crossing sweeper; his crossing was in Holborn, and there every day he swept up the mud, and begged for pennies from the people who passed. Poor Jo wasn't at all pleasant to look at. He wasn't pretty, and he wasn't clean. His clothes were only a few poor rags that hardly protected him from the cold and the rain. He had never been to school, and he could neither write nor read—could not even spell his own name. He had only one name, Jo, and that served him for Christian and surname too.

Poor Jo! He was ugly, dirty, and ignorant; but he knew one thing, that it was wicked to tell a lie, and knowing this, he always told the truth. One other thing poor Jo knew too well, and that was what being hungry means. Little Jo was very poor. He lived in Tom-all-Alones, one of the most horrible places in all London. The road here is thick with mud. The crazy houses are dropping away; two of them, Jo remembered, once fell to pieces. The air one breathes here is full of fever. The people who live in this dreadful den are the poorest of London's poor, all miserably clad, all dirty, all very hungry. They know and like Jo, for he is always

willing to go on errands for them, and does them many little acts of kindness. Not that they speak of him as Jo.

Oh, dear no! No one in Tom-all-Alones is spoken of by his name, whether it be his surname, or that which his godfathers and godmothers, always supposing that he had any, gave him. The ladies and gentlemen who live in this unfashionable neighborhood have their fashions just as much as the great folks who live in the grand mansions in the West End. Here one of the prevailing customs is to give everyone a nickname. Thus it is that if you inquired there for a boy named Jo you would be asked whether you meant Carrots, or the Colonel, or Gallows, or young Chisel, or Terrier Tip, or Lankey, the Brick.

Jo was generally called Toughy, although a few superior persons who gave themselves airs and graces, and affected a dignified style of speaking, called him "the tough subject."

Jo used to say he had never had but one friend.

One cold, winter night, when he was shivering in a doorway near his crossing, a dark-haired, rough-bearded man turned to look at him, and then came back and began to talk to him.

"Have you a friend, boy?" he asked presently.

"No, never 'ad none."

"Neither have I. Not one. Take this, and good night," and so saying the man, who looked

very poor and shabby, put into Jo's hand the price of a supper and a night's lodging.

Often afterwards the stranger would stop to talk with Jo, and give him money whenever he had any to give. When he had none he would merely say, "I am as poor as you are today, Jo," and pass on.

One day Jo was fetched away from his crossing by the Beadle, and taken by him to the Sol's Arms, a public house in a little court near Chancery Lane, where the Coroner was holding an inquest—an "ink-wich" Jo called it.

"Did the boy know the deceased?" asked the Coroner.

Indeed Jo had known him; it was his only friend who was dead.

"He was very good to me, he was," was all poor Jo could say.

The next day they buried the dead man in the churchyard hard by; a churchyard hemmed in by houses on either side, and separated by an iron gate from the wretched court through which one goes to it.

But that night there came a slouching figure through the court to the iron gate. It held the gate with both hands and looked between the bars—stood looking in for a little while, then with an old broom it softly swept the step and made the archway clean. It was poor Jo; and as, after one more long look through the bars of the gate, he went



Poor Jo looks through the iron railing
at his friend's grave—

away he softly said to himself, "He was very good to me, he was."

Now, there happened to be at the inquest a kind-hearted little man named Snagsby, who was a stationer by trade, and he pitied Jo so much that he gave him half a crown. Half a crown was Mr. Snagsby's one remedy for all the troubles of this world.

Jo was very sad after the death of his one friend, the more so as his friend had died in great poverty and misery, with no one near him to care whether he lived or not.

It was a few days after the funeral, while Jo was still living on Mr. Snagsby's half crown, half a bill, Jo called it, that a much bigger slice of good luck fell to his share. He was standing at his crossing as the day closed in, when a lady closely veiled and plainly dressed came up to him.

"Are you the boy Jo who was examined at the inquest?" she asked.

"That's me," said Jo.

"Come farther up the court. I want to speak to you."

"Wot, about him as was dead? Did you know him?"

"How dare you ask me if I knew him!"

"No offense, my lady," said Jo humbly.

"Listen and hold your tongue. Show me the place where he lived, then where he died, then where

they buried him. Go in front of me, don't look back once, and I'll pay you well."

"I'm fly," said Jo. "But no larks, yer know. Stow hooking it."

Jo takes her to each of the places she wants to see, and he notices that when he shows her the burying place she shrinks into a dark corner as if to hide herself while she looks at the spot where the dead man's body rests. Then she draws off her glove, and Jo sees that she has sparkling rings on her fingers. She drops a coin into his hand and is gone. Jo holds the coin to the light and sees to his joy that it is a golden sovereign. He bites it to make sure that it is genuine, and being satisfied that it has successfully stood the test, he puts it under his tongue for safety, and goes off to Tom-all-Alones.

But people in Jo's position in life find it hard to change a sovereign, for who will believe that they can come by it honestly? So poor little Jo didn't get much of the sovereign for himself; for, as he afterwards told Mr. Snagsby:

"I had to pay five bob down in Tom-all-Alones before they'd square it for to give me change, and then a young man he thieved another five while I was asleep, and a boy he thieved ninepence, and the landlord he stood drains round with a lot more of it."

And so Jo was left alone in the world again, now that his friend was dead. And this poor friend had

only two mourners, Jo, the crossing sweeper, and the lady who had come to look at his grave.

Jo mourned for him because he had been his only friend, and the lady mourned for the poor man because she had loved him dearly many years ago when they had both been young together.

As time went on, Jo's troubles began in earnest. The police turned him away from his crossing, and wherever they met him they ordered him to "move on." It was hard, very hard on poor Jo; for he knew no way of getting a living except at his crossing. He went back to it as often as he dared, until the police turned him away again. Once a policeman, angry to find that Jo hadn't moved on, seized him by the arm and dragged him down to Mr. Snagsby's.

"What's the matter, constable?" asked Mr. Snagsby.

"This boy's as obstinate a young gonoph as I know; although repeatedly told to, he won't move on."

"I'm always a-moving on," cried Jo. "Oh, my eye, where am I to move to?"

"My instructions don't go to that," the constable answered, "my instructions are that you're to keep moving on. Now the simple question is, sir," turning to Mr. Snagsby, "whether you know him. He says you do."

"Yes, I know him."

“Very well, I leave him here; but mind you keep moving on.”

The constable then moved on himself, leaving Jo at Mr. Snagsby's. There was a little tea party there that evening, and Mr. Snagsby filled Jo's hands with the remains of the little feast they had had.

And now Jo began to find life rougher and harder than ever. He lost his crossing altogether, and spent day after day in moving on. He grew hungrier and thinner, and at last the foul air of Tom-all-Alones began to have an ill-effect even on him—“the tough subject.” His throat grew very dry, his cheeks were burning hot, and his poor little head ached till the pain made him cry. Then he remembered a poor woman he had once done a kindness to, a brickmaker's wife, who had told him she lived at St. Albans, and that a lady there had been very good to her. “Perhaps she'll be good to me,” thought Jo, and he started off to go to St. Albans.

So it came about that one Saturday night Jo reached that town very tired and very ill. Happily for him the brickmaker's wife met him and took him into her cottage. While he was resting there a lady came in.

The lady sat down by the bed, and asked him very kindly what was the matter.

“I'm a-being froze and then burnt up, and then froze and burnt up again ever so many times over in an hour. And my head's all sleepy, and all a-going

round like, and I'm so dry, and my bones is nothing half so much bones as pain."

"Where are you going?"

"Somewheres," replied Jo, "I'm a-being moved on, I am."

"Well, tonight you must come with me, and I'll make you comfortable." So Jo went with the lady to a great house not far off, and there in a nice warm loft they made a bed for him, and brought him tempting wholesome food. Everyone was very kind to him, even the servants called him "Old Chap," and told him he would soon be well. Jo was really happy, and for a time forgot his pain and fever. But something frightened Jo, and he felt he could not stay there, and he ran out into the cold night air. Where he went he could never remember, for when he next came to his senses he found himself in a hospital. He stayed there for some weeks and was then discharged, though still weak and ill. He was very thin, and when he drew a breath his chest was very painful. "It draws," said Jo, "as heavy as a cart." Now a certain young doctor by the name of Allan Woodcourt takes a stroll through Tom-all-Alones one morning. The banks of a stagnant channel of mud is the main street of Tom-all-Alones; nothing is to be seen but the crazy houses, shut up and silent. Tom-all-Alones is still asleep and nothing is astir.

Yes, something is! He sees a ragged figure coming very carefully along, crouching close to the soiled

walls—which the wretchedest figure might as well avoid—and thrusting a hand before it. It is the figure of a boy, whose face is hollow, and whose eyes have an emaciated glare. He is so intent on getting along unseen that even the appearance of a stranger in whole garments does not tempt him to look back. He shades his face with his ragged elbow as he passes on the other side of the way, and goes shrinking and creeping on, with his anxious hand before him, and his shapeless clothes hanging in shreds. Clothes made for what purpose, or of what material, it would be impossible to say. They look, in color and in substance, like a bundle of rank leaves of swampy growth that rotted long ago.

Allan Woodcourt pauses to look after him and note all this. He walks on thinking about the child and soon, overtaking him, stops to talk to him. Jo has known so little kindness in his forlorn life and is so ill that he can scarcely answer the good doctor, but presently Jo takes courage and he looks at the friendly face and hears the quiet voice, and is quite ready to follow Allan Woodcourt.

Jo was taken to a clean little room, and bathed, and had clean clothes, and good food, and kind people about him once more, but he was too ill now, far too ill, for anything to do him any good.

“Let me lie here quiet,” said poor Jo, “and be so kind anyone as is passin’ nigh where I used to

sweep, as to say to Mr. Snagsby as Jo, wot he knew once, is a-moving on."

One day the young doctor was sitting by him, when suddenly Jo made a strong effort to get out of bed.

"Well, Jo, what is the matter? Don't be frightened."

"I thought," says Jo, who has started and is looking round, "I thought I was in Tom-all-Alones again. An't there nobody here but you, Mr. Woodcourt?"

"Nobody."

"And I an't took back to Tom-all-Alones. Am I, sir?"

"No."

Jo closes his eyes, muttering, "I'm wery thankful."

After watching him closely a little while, Allan puts his mouth very near his ear, and says to him in a low, distinct voice:

"Jo! Did you ever know a prayer?"

"Never know'd nothink, sir."

"Not so much as one short prayer?"

"No, sir. Nothink at all. Mr. Chadbands he wos a-prayin' wunst at Mr. Snagsby's and I heerd him, but he sounded as if he was a-speakin' to hisself, and not to me. He prayed a lot, but *I* couldn't make out nothink on it. *I* never know'd what it wos all about."

It takes him a long time to say this; and few but an experienced and attentive listener could hear or, hearing, understand him. After a short relapse into sleep or stupor, he makes, of a sudden, a strong effort to get out of bed.

"Stay, Jo, stay! What now?"

"It's time for me to go to that there berryin' ground, sir," he returns with a wild look.

"Lie down, and tell me. What burying ground, Jo?"

"Where they laid him as wos very good to me, very good to me indeed, he wos. It's time for me to go down to that there berryin' ground, sir, and ask to be put along with him. I wants to go there and be berried. He used fur to say to me, 'I am as poor as you today, Jo,' he ses. I wants to tell him that I am as poor as him now, and have come there to be laid along with him."

"By and by, Jo. By and by."

"Ah! P'r'aps they wouldn't do it if I wos to go myself. But will you promise to have me took there, sir, and laid along with him?"

"I will, indeed."

"Thank'ee, sir. Thank'ee, sir! They'll have to get the key of the gate afore they can take me in, for it's allus locked. And there's a step there, as I used fur to clean with my broom. It's turned very dark, sir. Is there any light a-comin'?"

"It is coming fast, Jo.

Fast. The cart is shaken all to pieces, and the rugged road is very near its end.

"Jo, my poor fellow!"

"I hear you, sir, in the dark, but I'm a-gropin'—a-gropin'—let me catch hold of your hand."

"Jo, can you say what I say?"

"I'll say anythink as you say, sir, for I knows it's good."

"OUR FATHER."

"Our Father!—yes, that's verry good, sir!"

"WHICH ART IN HEAVEN."

"Art in Heaven—is the light a-comin, sir?"

"It is close at hand. HALLOWED BE THY NAME."

"Hallowed be—Thy—name!"

The light is come upon the dark, benighted way.
Dead!

Dead, your majesty. Dead, my lords and gentlemen. Dead, Right Reverends and Wrong Reverends of every order. Dead, men and women born with heavenly compassion in your hearts. And dying thus around us every day!

—*Bleak House*

OLIVER TWIST

LITTLE OLIVER TWIST was an orphan. He never saw his mother or his father. He was born at the workhouse, where his poor, heart-broken mother had been taken just a short time before baby Oliver came; and the very night he was born she was so sick and weak that she said, "Let me see my child, and then I will die." The old nurse answered, "Nonsense, my dear; you must not think of dying; you have something now to live for."

The doctor said she must be very brave and she might get well. They brought her baby to her, and she hugged him in her weak arms and she kissed him many times and cuddled him up as close as her feeble arms could hold him; and then she looked at him long and steadily, and a sweet smile came over her face and a bright light came into her eyes, and before the smile could pass from her lips she died.

The old nurse wept as she took the baby from its dead mother's arms; and the doctor said, as he looked at her, "Poor, poor girl, she is so beautiful and so young! What strange fate has brought her to this poor place? Nurse, take good care of the baby, for his mother must have been a kind and gentle woman."

Nobody knew what the young mother's name was, and so this baby had no name, until, at last, Mr. Bumble, who was one of the parish officers, named him *Oliver Twist*.

When little Oliver Twist was nine months old they took him away from the workhouse and carried him to the "Poor Farm," where there were twenty-five or thirty other poor children who had no parents. Here Oliver remained until he was nine years old, though he was a little pale fellow and did not look more than seven.

Mr. Bumble came and said that the board (which meant the men in charge) had decided they must take Oliver away from the farm and carry him back to the workhouse. Oliver was sorry to leave; for, miserable as the place was, he dearly loved his little companions. They were all the people he knew; and he wept with sorrow as he told them good-by and was led by Mr. Bumble back to the workhouse, where he was born and where his mother had died nine years ago that very day.

When he got back there he found the old nurse who remembered his mother. She told him that his mother was a beautiful sweet woman and that she had kissed him and held him in her arms when she died. Night after night little Oliver dreamed about his beautiful mother, and she seemed sometimes to stand by his bed and to look down upon him with the same beautiful eyes and the same sweet smile of

which the nurse told him. Every time he had a chance, he asked questions about her, but the nurse could not tell him anything more. She did not even know her name.

Oliver had been at the workhouse only a very short time when Mr. Bumble came in and told him he must appear before the board at once. Now Oliver was puzzled at this. He thought a board was a piece of flat wood, and he could not imagine why he was to appear before that. But he was too much afraid to ask any questions. Mr. Bumble took him into a room where several stern-looking gentlemen sat at a long table. "Bow to the board," said Mr. Bumble to Oliver. Oliver looked about for a board, and seeing none he bowed to the table, because it looked more like a board than anything else.

The men laughed, and one in the white waist-coat said, "The boy is a fool. I thought he was." They told Oliver he was an orphan and they had supported him all his life. He ought to be very thankful. "Now," they said, "you are nine years old, and we must put you out to learn a trade." They told him he should begin the next morning at six o'clock to pick oakum, and work at that until they could get him a place.

Oliver was faithful at his work, in which several other boys assisted, but oh! how hungry they got, for they were given but one little bowl of gruel at a

meal, hardly enough for a kitten. One day the boys said they must ask for more, and they "drew straws" to see who should venture to do so. It fell to Oliver's lot to do it. The next meal, when they had emptied their bowls, Oliver walked up to the man who helped them and said very politely, "Please, sir, may I not have some more? I am very hungry." This made the man very angry and he called for Mr. Bumble. He came, and when told that Oliver had "asked for more," he grabbed him by the collar and took him before the board and made the complaint that he had been very naughty and rebellious. The board was angry at Oliver, and the man in the white waistcoat told them again the boy would be hanged, and they must get rid of him at once. So they offered the sum of five pounds to anyone who would take him.

The first man who came was a chimney sweeper. The board agreed to let him have Oliver; but, when they took him before the magistrates, Oliver fell on his knees and begged them not to let that man have him, and they would not, so Oliver was taken back to the workhouse.

The next man who came was Mr. Sowerberry, an undertaker. He was a good man, and the magistrates let him take Oliver along. But he had a stingy wife, and a disagreeable servant girl by the name of Charlotte, and a big, overbearing boy by the name of Noah Claypole, whom he had taken to



Oliver asks Mr. Bumble for more

raise. Oliver thought he would like Mr. Sowerberry well enough, but his heart fell when "the Mrs." met him and called him "boy" and a "measly-looking little pauper," and gave him for supper the scraps she had put up for the dog. But he hoped, by faithful work, to win kind treatment.

They made him sleep by himself in the shop, and he was very much frightened; but he thought he would rather sleep there than with that terrible boy, Noah. The first night he dreamed of his beautiful mother, and thought again he could see her with the same sweet smile upon her face. He was awakened the next morning by Noah, who told him he had to obey him, and he'd better look out or he'd wear the life out of him. Noah kicked and cuffed Oliver several times, but the poor boy was too much used to that to resent it, and determined to do his work well.

Mr. Sowerberry found Oliver so good, sensible, and polite that he made him his assistant and took him to all the funerals, and occasionally gave him a penny. Oliver went into fine houses and saw people and sights he had never dreamed of before. Mr. Sowerberry had told him he might some day be an undertaker himself; and Oliver worked hard to please his master, though Noah and Mrs. Sowerberry and Charlotte grew more unkind to him all the time, because "he was put forward," they said, "and Noah was kept back." This, of course, made Noah worse than ever to Oliver, though Charlotte did

sometimes try to make him less cruel, but Oliver determined to endure it all rather than complain, and try to win them over after awhile by being kind. He could have borne any insult to himself, but Noah tried the little fellow too far when he attacked the name of Oliver's mother, and it brought serious trouble, as we shall see.

One day, Oliver and Noah had descended into the kitchen at the usual dinner hour, when, Charlotte being called out of the way, there ensued a brief interval of time, which Noah Claypole, being hungry and vicious, considered he could not possibly devote to a worthier purpose than tantalizing young Oliver Twist.

Intent upon this innocent amusement, Noah put his feet on the tablecloth; and pulled Oliver's hair; and twitched his ears; and expressed his opinion that he was a "sneak." Furthermore he announced his intention of coming to see him hanged, whenever that desirable event should take place; and entered upon various other topics of petty annoyance, like a malicious and ill-conditioned charity boy as he was. But, none of these taunts producing the desired effect of making Oliver cry, Noah began to talk about his mother.

"Work'us," said Noah, "how's your mother?"

"She's dead," replied Oliver. "Don't you say anything about her to me!"

Oliver's color rose as he said this; he breathed

quickly; and there was a curious working of the mouth and nostrils, which Noah thought must be the immediate precursor of a violent fit of crying. Under this impression he returned to the charge.

"What did she die of, Work'us?" said Noah.

"Of a broken heart, some of our old nurses told me," replied Oliver; more as if he were talking to himself than answering Noah. "I think I know what it must be to die of that!"

"Tol de rol lol lol, right fol lairy, Work'us," said Noah, as a tear rolled down Oliver's cheek. "What's set you a-sniveling now?"

"Not *you*," replied Oliver, hastily brushing the tear away. "Don't think it."

"Oh, not me, eh?" sneered Noah.

"No, not you," replied Oliver, sharply. "There, that's enough. Don't say anything more to me about her; you'd better not!"

"Yer know, Work'us," continued Noah, emboldened by Oliver's silence, and speaking in a jeering tone of affected pity. "Yer know, Work'us, it can't be helped now; and of course yer couldn't help it then. But yer must know, Work'us, yer mother was a regular right-down bad 'un."

Crimson with fury, Oliver started up, overthrew the chair and table, seized Noah by the throat and shook him, in the violence of his rage, till his teeth chattered in his head. Then, collecting his whole force into one heavy blow, he felled him to the ground.

A minute before the boy had looked the quiet, mild, dejected creature that harsh treatment had made him. But his spirit was roused at last; the cruel insult to his dead mother had set his blood on fire. His breast heaved; his attitude was erect; his eye bright and vivid; his whole person changed, as he stood glaring over the cowardly tormentor who now lay crouching at his feet, and defied him with an energy he had never known before.

“He’ll murder me!” blubbered Noah. “Charlotte! Missis! Here’s the new boy a-murdering of me! Help! Help! Oliver’s gone mad! Char—lotte!”

Noah’s shouts were responded to by a loud scream from Charlotte and a louder from Mrs. Sowerberry, the former of whom rushed into the kitchen by a side door, while the latter paused on the staircase till she was quite certain that it was safe to come farther down. Between them they locked Oliver in a closet in the cellar and sent for Mr. Bumble.

That gentleman, being a great coward, did nothing but talk, so Oliver remained in the closet until Mr. Sowerberry came home. When he heard all the wild story told by the others, he gave Oliver a beating and left him locked for the day in the back kitchen with only bread and water for food. When night came and he was alone in the silence of the gloomy workshop of the undertaker, Oliver gave way to the feelings which the day’s treatment may be supposed likely to have awakened in a mere child.

He had listened to their taunts with a look of contempt; he had borne the last without a cry; for he felt that pride swelling in his heart which would have kept down a shriek to the last. But now, when there was none to see or hear him, he fell upon his knees on the floor; and, hiding his face in his hands, wept bitter tears and prayed in his bleeding heart that God would help him to get away from these cruel people. There upon his knees, Oliver determined to run away, and, rising, tied up a few clothes in a handkerchief and went to bed.

With the first ray of light that struggled through the crevices in the shutters, Oliver arose and unbarred the door. One timid look around, one moment's pause of hesitation, he had closed it behind him, and was in the open street.

He looked to the right and to the left, uncertain which way to fly. He remembered to have seen the wagons, as they went out, toiling up the hill. He took the same route; and arriving at a footpath across the fields, which he knew, after some distance, led out again into the road, struck into it, and walked quickly on.

Along this same footpath, Oliver well remembered, he had trotted beside Mr. Bumble, when he first carried him to the workhouse from the farm. His heart beat quickly when he bethought himself of this, and he half resolved to turn back. He had come a long way though, and should lose a great

deal of time by doing so. Besides, it was so early that there was very little fear of his being seen; so he walked on.

He reached the house. There was no appearance of its inmates' stirring at that early hour. Oliver stopped, and peeped into the garden. A child was weeding one of the little beds; as he stopped, he raised his pale face and disclosed the features of one of his former companions. Oliver felt glad to see him before he went; for, though younger than himself, he had been his little friend and playmate. They had been beaten, and starved, and shut up together many and many a time.

"Hush, Dick!" said Oliver, as the boy ran to the gate, and thrust his thin arm between the rails to greet him. "Is anyone up?"

"Nobody but me," replied the child.

"You musn't say you saw me, Dick," said Oliver. "I am running away. They beat and ill-use me, Dick; and I am going to seek my fortune some long way off. I don't know where. How pale you are!"

"I heard the doctor tell them I was dying," replied the child, with a faint smile. "I am very glad to see you, dear; but don't stop, don't stop!"

"Yes, yes, I will, to say good-by, to you," replied Oliver. "I shall see you again, Dick. I know I shall. You will be well and happy."

"I hope so," replied the child, "after I am dead, but not before. I know the doctor must be right, Oliver, because I dream so much of heaven, and angels, and kind faces that I never see when I am awake. Kiss me," said the child, climbing up the low gate, and flinging his little arms around Oliver's neck. "Good-by, dear! God bless you!"

The blessing was from a young child's lips, but it was the first that Oliver had ever heard invoked upon his head; and through the struggles and sufferings, and troubles and changes of his after-life, he never once forgot it.

Oliver soon got into the highroad. It was eight o'clock now. Though he was nearly five miles away from the town, he ran, and hid behind the hedges, by turns, till noon, fearing that he might be pursued and overtaken. Then he sat down to rest by the side of the milestone.

The stone by which he was seated had a sign on it which said that it was just seventy miles from that spot to London. The name awakened a new train of ideas in the boy's mind. London—that great, large place! Nobody, not even Mr. Bumble, could ever find him there! He had often heard the old men in the workhouse, too, say that no lad of spirit need want in London; and that there were ways of living in that vast city which those who had been bred in the country parts had no idea of. It was the very place for a homeless boy, who must die in the

streets unless someone helped him. As these things passed through his thoughts, he jumped up on his feet and again walked forward.

He had diminished the distance between himself and London by full four miles more, before he recollected how much he must undergo ere he could hope to reach his place of destination. As this consideration forced itself upon him, he slackened his pace a little, and meditated upon his means of getting there. He had a crust of bread, a coarse shirt, and two pairs of stockings in his bundle. He had a penny, too—a gift of Sowerberry's after some funeral in which he had acquitted himself more than ordinarily well—in his pocket. "A clean shirt," thought Oliver, "is a very comfortable thing; and so are two pairs of darned stockings; and so is a penny; but they are small helps to a sixty-five miles' walk in winter time."

Day after day the weary but plucky boy walked on, and early on the seventh morning after he had left his native place, Oliver limped slowly into the little town of Barnet, and sat down on a door step to rest. Some few stopped to gaze at Oliver for a moment or two, or turned round to stare at him as they hurried by; but none relieved him, or troubled themselves to inquire how he came there. He had no heart to beg. And there he sat for some time, when he was roused by observing that a boy was watching him most earnestly from the opposite side

of the way. He took little heed of this at first; but the boy remained in the same attitude so long that Oliver raised his head and returned his steady look. Upon this, the boy crossed over, and, walking close up to Oliver, said:

“Hullo, my covey! What’s the row?”

The boy who addressed this inquiry to the young wayfarer was about his own age, but one of the queerest-looking boys that Oliver had ever seen. He was a snub-nosed, flat-browed, common-faced boy enough, and as dirty a juvenile as one would wish to see; but he had about him all the airs and manners of a man. He was short for his age; with rather bowlegs, and little, sharp, ugly eyes. His hat was stuck on the top of his head so lightly that it threatened to fall off every moment. He wore a man’s coat, which reached nearly to his heels.

“Hullo, my covey! What’s the row?” said the stranger.

“I am very hungry and tired,” replied Oliver; the tears standing in his eyes as he spoke. “I have walked a long way. I have been walking these seven days.”

“Walking for sivin days!” said the young gentleman. “Oh, I see. Beak’s order, eh! But,” he added, noticing Oliver’s look of surprise, “I suppose you don’t know what a beak is, my flash com-pan-i-on.”

Oliver mildly replied that he had always heard a bird’s mouth described by the word beak.

“My eyes, how green!” exclaimed the young gentleman. “Why, a beak’s a madgst’rate; and when you walk by a beak’s order, it’s not straight forerd.

“But come,” said the young gentleman, “you want grub, and you shall have it. Up with you on your pins. There! Now then!”

Assisting Oliver to rise, the young gentleman took him to an adjacent grocery store, where he purchased a sufficiency of ready-dressed ham and a half-quartern loaf, or, as he himself expressed it, “a fourpenny bran!” Taking the bread under his arm, the young gentleman turned into a small public-house, and led the way to a taproom in the rear of the premises. Here a pot of beer was brought in by direction of the mysterious youth; and Oliver, falling to at his new friend’s bidding, made a long and hearty meal, during which the strange boy eyed him from time to time with great attention.

“Going to London?” said the strange boy, when Oliver had at length concluded.

“Yes.”

“Got any lodgings?”

“No.”

“Money?”

“No.”

The strange boy whistled, and put his arms into his pockets as far as the big coat sleeves would let them go.

"Do you live in London?" inquired Oliver.

"Yes, I do, when I'm at home," replied the boy. "I suppose you want some place to sleep in to-night, don't you?"

"I do, indeed," answered Oliver. "I have not slept under a roof since I left the country."

"Don't fret your eyelids on that score," said the young gentleman. "I've got to be in London to-night: and I know a 'spectable old genelman as lives there, wot'll give you lodgings fer nothink, and never ask for the change; that is, if any gentleman he knows interduces you. And don't he know me? Oh, no! not in the least! By no means. Certainly not!" which was his queer way of saying that he and the old gentleman were good friends.

This unexpected offer of shelter was too tempting to be resisted, especially as it was immediately followed up by the assurance that the old gentleman referred to would doubtless provide Oliver with a comfortable place, without loss of time. This led to a more friendly and confidential dialogue; from which Oliver discovered that his friend's name was Jack Dawkins—among his intimate friends better known as the "Artful Dodger"—and that he was a peculiar pet and protégé of the elderly gentleman before mentioned.

As John Dawkins objected to their entering London before nightfall, it was nearly eleven o'clock when they reached the small city street, along which

the Dodger scudded at a rapid pace, directing Oliver to follow close at his heels.

Although Oliver had enough to occupy his attention in keeping sight of his leader, he could not help bestowing a few hasty glances on either side of the way as he passed along. A dirtier or more wretched place he had never seen.

Oliver was just considering whether he hadn't better run away, when they reached the bottom of the hill. His conductor, catching him by the arm, pushed open the door of a house, and, drawing him into the passage, closed it behind them.

"Now, then!" cried a voice from below, in reply to a whistle from the Dodger.

"Plummy and Slam!" was the reply.

This seemed to be some watchword or signal that all was right, for the light of a feeble candle gleamed on the wall at the remote end of the passage, and a man's face peeped out from where a balustrade of the old kitchen staircase had been broken away.

"There's two of you," said the man, thrusting the candle farther out, and shading his eyes with his hand. "Who's t'other one?"

"A new pal," replied Jack Dawkins, pulling Oliver forward.

"Where did he come from?"

"Greenland. Is Fagin upstairs?"

"Yes; he's a-sortin' the wipes. Up with you!" The candle was drawn back, and the face disappeared.

Oliver, groping his way with one hand, and having the other firmly grasped by his companion, ascended with much difficulty the dark and broken stairs, which his conductor mounted with an ease and expedition that showed he was well acquainted with them. He threw open the door of a back room, and drew Oliver in after him.

The walls and ceiling of the room were perfectly black with age and dirt. There was a deal table before the fire, upon which were a candle stuck in a ginger-beer bottle, two or three pewter pots, a loaf and butter, and a plate. Seated round the table were four or five boys, none older than the Dodger, smoking long clay pipes and drinking spirits, with the air of middle-aged men. These all crowded about their associate as he whispered a few words to the proprietor; and then turned round and grinned at Oliver. So did the man himself, toasting fork in hand.

"This is him, Fagin," said Jack Dawkins, "my friend, Oliver Twist."

Fagin grinned, and, making a low obeisance to Oliver, took him by the hand, and hoped he should have the honor of his intimate acquaintance. Upon this, the young gentlemen with the pipes came round him and shook both his hands very hard.

"We are very glad to see you, Oliver, very," said Fagin. "Dodger, take off the sausages, and draw a tub near the fire for Oliver. Ah! you're a-staring at

the pocket handkerchiefs, eh, my dear? There are a good many of 'em, ain't there? We've just looked 'em out, ready for the wash; that's all, Oliver—that's all. Ha! ha! ha!"

The latter part of this speech was hailed by a boisterous shout from all the pupils of the merry old gentleman, in the midst of which they went to supper.

Oliver ate his share, and immediately afterward he felt himself gently lifted on to one of the sacks; and then he sunk into a deep sleep.

It was late next morning when Oliver awoke from a sound, long sleep. There was no other person in the room but Fagin, who was boiling some coffee in a saucepan for breakfast, and whistling softly to himself as he stirred it round and round with an iron spoon. He would stop every now and then to listen when there was the least noise below; and when he had satisfied himself, he would go on, whistling and stirring again, as before. Presently Oliver asked if he might get up.

"Certainly, my dear, certainly," replied the old gentleman. "There's a pitcher of water in the corner by the door. Bring it here, and I'll give you a basin to wash in, my dear."

He had scarcely washed himself, and made everything tidy by emptying the basin out of the window, agreeably to Fagin's directions, when the Dodger returned, accompanied by a very sprightly young

friend, whom Oliver had seen smoking on the previous night, and who was now formally introduced to him as Charley Bates. The four sat down to breakfast on the coffee and some hot rolls and ham which the Dodger had brought home in the crown of his hat.

"Well," said Fagin, glancing slyly at Oliver, and addressing himself to the Dodger, "I hope you've been at work this morning, my dears."

"Hard," replied the Dodger.

"As nails," added Charley Bates.

"Good boys, good boys!" said Fagin. "What have *you*, Dodger?"

"A couple of pocketbooks," replied that young gentleman.

"Lined?" inquired Fagin, with eagerness.

"Pretty well," replied the Dodger, producing two pocketbooks.

"Not so heavy as they might be," said Fagin after looking at the insides carefully, "but very neat and nicely made. Ingenious workman, ain't he, Oliver?"

"Very, indeed, sir," said Oliver. At which Mr. Charles Bates laughed uproariously, very much to the amazement of Oliver, who saw nothing to laugh at in anything that had passed.

"And what have you got, my dear?" said Fagin to Charley Bates.

"Wipes," replied Master Bates; at the same time producing four pocket handkerchiefs.

"Well," said Fagin, inspecting them closely, "they're very good ones, very. You haven't marked them well, though, Charley; so the marks shall be picked out with a needle, and we'll teach Oliver how to do it. Shall us, Oliver, eh? Ha! ha! ha!"

"If you please, sir," said Oliver.

"You'd like to be able to make pocket handkerchiefs as easy as Charley Bates, wouldn't you, my dear?" said Fagin.

"Very much, indeed, if you'll teach me, sir," replied Oliver.

Master Bates burst into another laugh.

"He is so jolly green!" said Charley when he recovered, as an apology to the company for his unpolite behavior.

The Dodger said nothing, but he smoothed Oliver's hair over his eyes, and said he'd know better by and by.

When the breakfast was cleared away, the merry old gentleman and the two boys played at a very curious and uncommon game, which was performed in this way: the merry old gentleman, placing a snuffbox in one pocket of his trousers, a note case in the other, and a watch in his waistcoat pocket, with a guard chain round his neck, and sticking a mock-diamond pin in his shirt, buttoned his coat tight round him, and putting his spectacle case and handkerchief in his pockets, trotted up and down the room with a stick, in imitation of the manner in

which old gentlemen walk about the streets any hour in the day.

Now during all this time the two boys followed him closely about, getting out of his sight so nimbly every time he turned round that it was impossible to follow their motions. At last the Dodger trod upon his toes or ran upon his boot accidentally, while Charlie Bates stumbled up against him behind; and in that one moment they took from him, with the most extraordinary rapidity, snuffbox, note case, watch guard, chain, shirt pin, pocket handkerchief, even the spectacle case. If the old gentleman felt a hand in any one of his pockets, he cried out where it was, and then the game began all over again.

When this game had been played a great many times, Charley Bates expressed it as his opinion that it was time to pad the hoof. This, it occurred to Oliver, must be French for going out; for, directly afterward, the Dodger and Charley went away together, having been kindly furnished by Fagin with money to spend.

"There, my dear," said Fagin. "That's a pleasant life, isn't it? They have gone out for the day."

"Have they done work, sir?" inquired Oliver.

"Yes," said the old man; "that is, unless they should unexpectedly come across any when they are out; and they won't neglect it if they do, my dear, depend upon it. Make 'em your models, my dear,

make 'em your models," tapping the fire shovel on the hearth to add force to his words. "Do everything they bid you, and take their advice in all matters, especially the Dodger, my dear. He'll be a great man himself, and will make you one, too, if you take pattern by him. Is my handkerchief hanging out of my pocket, my dear?" said he, stopping short.

"Yes, sir," said Oliver.

"See if you can take it out, without my feeling it, as you saw them do when we were at play this morning."

Oliver held up the bottom of the pocket with one hand, as he had seen the Dodger hold it, and drew the handkerchief lightly out with the other.

"Is it gone?" cried Fagin.

"Here it is, sir," said Oliver, showing it in his hand.

"You're a clever boy, my dear," said the playful old gentleman, patting Oliver on the head approvingly. "I never saw a sharper lad. Here's a shilling for you. If you go on in this way, you'll be the greatest man of the time. And now come here and I'll show you how to take the marks out of the handkerchief."

Oliver wondered what picking the old gentleman's pocket in play had to do with his chances of being a great man. But, thinking that Fagin, being so much his senior, must know best, he followed

him quietly to the table, and was soon deeply involved in his new study.

For many days Oliver remained in the room, picking the marks out of the pocket handkerchiefs (of which a great number were brought home) and sometimes taking part in the game already described, which the two boys and Fagin played, regularly, every morning.

At length, one morning, Oliver obtained permission to go out with the boys. There had been no handkerchiefs to work upon for two or three days, and the dinners had been rather meager. Perhaps these were reasons for the old gentleman's giving his assent; but, whether they were or not, he told Oliver he might go, and placed him under the joint guardianship of Charley Bates and his friend, the Dodger.

The three boys started out; the Dodger with his coat sleeves tucked up and his hat cocked, as usual; Master Bates sauntering along with his hands in his pockets; and Oliver between them, wondering where they were going, and what they would teach him to make first.

They were just coming from a narrow court not far from an open square, which is yet called "The Green," when the Dodger made a sudden stop, and, laying his finger on his lip, drew his companions back again, with the greatest caution.

"What's the matter?" demanded Oliver.

"Hush!" replied the Dodger. "Do you see that old cove at the book stall?"

"The old gentleman over the way?" said Oliver. "Yes, I see him."

"He'll do," said the Dodger.

"A prime plant," observed Master Charley Bates.

Oliver looked from one to the other with the greatest surprise, but he was not permitted to make any inquiries; for the two boys walked stealthily across the road and slunk close behind the old gentleman. Oliver walked a few paces after them, and, not knowing whether to advance or retire, stood looking on in silent amazement.

The old gentleman was a very respectable-looking personage, with a powdered head and gold spectacles, as he stood reading a book. What was Oliver's horror and alarm as he stood a few paces off, looking on with his eyelids as wide open as they would possibly go, to see the Dodger plunge his hand into the old gentleman's pocket and draw from thence a handkerchief; and then to see him hand the same to Charley Bates; and finally to behold them both running away round the corner.

In an instant the whole mystery of the handkerchiefs rushed upon the boy's mind. He stood, for a moment, with the blood so tingling through all his veins from terror that he felt as if he were in a burning fire; then, confused and frightened, he, too, took to

his heels, and, not knowing what he did, made off as fast as he could lay his feet to the ground.

This was all done in a minute's space. In the very instant when Oliver began to run, the old gentleman, putting his hand to his pocket, and missing his handkerchief, turned sharp around. Seeing the boy scudding away at such a rapid pace, he very naturally concluded him to be the thief, and, shouting, "Stop, thief!" with all his might, made off after him, book in hand.

But the old gentleman was not the only person who raised the hue and cry. The Dodger and Master Bates, unwilling to attract public attention by running down the open street, had merely retired into the very first doorway round the corner. They no sooner heard the cry, and saw Oliver running, than, guessing exactly how the matter stood, they issued forth with great promptitude; and shouting, "Stop, thief!" too, joined in the pursuit like good citizens.

Away they run, pell-mell, helter-skelter, slapdash; tearing, yelling, screaming, knocking down the passengers as they turn the corners, rousing up the dogs, and astonishing the fowls; and making streets, squares, and courts reëcho with the sound.

At last a burly fellow struck Oliver a terrible blow and he went down upon the pavement. The crowd eagerly gathered around him, each newcomer jostling and struggling with the others to catch a glimpse. "Stand aside!" "Give him a little air!"

“Nonsense! he don’t deserve it!” “Where’s the gentleman?” “Here he is, coming down the street.” “Make room there for the gentleman!” “Is this the boy, sir?”

Oliver lay, covered with mud and dust, and bleeding from the mouth, looking wildly round upon the heap of faces that surrounded him, when the old gentleman was officiously dragged and pushed into the circle by the foremost of the pursuers.

“Yes,” said the gentleman, “I am afraid it is the boy.”

“Afraid!” murmured the crowd. “That’s a good un!”

“Poor fellow!” said the gentleman, “he has hurt himself.”

“I did that, sir,” said a great, lubberly fellow, stepping forward, “and precious I cut my knuckle agin his mouth. I stopped him, sir.”

The fellow touched his hat with a grin, expecting something for his pains; but the old gentleman, eyeing him with an expression of dislike, looked anxiously round, as if he contemplated running away himself: which it is very possible he might have attempted to do, and thus have afforded another chase, had not a police officer (who is generally the last person to arrive in such cases) at that moment made his way through the crowd, and seized Oliver by the collar.

“Come, get up,” said the man roughly.

"It wasn't me, indeed, sir. Indeed, indeed, it was two other boys," said Oliver, clasping his hands passionately and looking round. "They are here somewhere."

"Oh, no, they ain't," said the officer. He meant this to be ironical, but it was true besides; for the Dodger and Charley Bates had filed off down the first convenient court they came to. "Come, get up!"

"Don't hurt him," said the old man compassionately.

"Oh, no, I won't hurt him," replied the officer. "Come, I know you; it won't do. Will you stand upon your legs, you young devil?"

Oliver, who could hardly stand, made a shift to raise himself on his feet, and was at once lugged along the streets by the jacket collar at a rapid pace. The gentleman walked on with them by the officer's side.

At last they came to a place called Mutton Hill. Here he was led beneath a low archway, and up a dirty court, where they saw a stout man with a bunch of whiskers on his face and a bunch of keys in his hand.

"What's the matter now?" said the man carelessly.

"A young fogle hunter," replied the officer who had Oliver in charge.

"Are you the party that's been robbed, sir?" inquired the man with the keys.

"Yes, I am," replied the old gentleman, "but I am not sure that this boy actually took the handkerchief. I would rather not press the case."

"Must go before the magistrate now, sir," replied the man. "His worship will be disengaged in half a minute. Now, young gallows!"

This was an invitation for Oliver to enter through a door which he unlocked as he spoke, and which led into a stone cell. Here he was searched, and, nothing being found upon him, locked up.

The old gentleman looked almost as unhappy as Oliver when the key grated in the lock.

At last the gentleman, Mr. Brownlow, by name, was summoned before the magistrate. Oliver was brought in, and the magistrate ordered the policeman to tell what happened.

The policeman related how he had taken the boy; how he had searched Oliver, and found nothing on his person; and how that was all he knew about it.

"Are there any witnesses?" inquired the magistrate.

Mr. Brownlow stated his case, observing that, in the surprise of the moment, he had run after the boy because he saw him running away.

"He has been hurt already," said the old gentleman, in conclusion. "And I fear," he added, with great energy, looking toward the bar, "I really fear that he is ill."

"Oh! yes, I dare say!" said the magistrate. "Come, you young vagabond. What's your name?"

Oliver tried to reply, but his tongue failed him. He was deadly pale; and the whole place seemed turning round and round. As he fell fainting to the floor an elderly man of decent but poor appearance, clad in an old suit of black, rushed in.

"Stop! stop! Don't take him away! For heaven's sake, stop a moment!" cried the newcomer, breathless with haste.

"What is this? Who is this?" cried the magistrate.

"*I will speak*," cried the man. "I saw it all. I keep the book stall. I demand to be sworn. I will not be put down. You must hear me, sir."

The man was right. His manner was determined; and the matter was growing rather too serious to be hushed up.

"Swear the man," growled the magistrate. "Now, man, what have you got to say?"

"This," said the man. "I saw three boys, two others and the prisoner here, loitering on the opposite side of the way, when this gentleman was reading. The robbery was committed by another boy. I saw it done; and I saw this boy was perfectly amazed and stupefied by it."

"Why didn't you come here before?" said the magistrate, after a pause.

"I hadn't a soul to mind the shop," replied the man. "Everybody who could have helped me had joined in the pursuit. I could get nobody till five minutes ago; and I have run here all the way to speak the truth."

"The boy is discharged. Clear the office!" shouted the irate magistrate.

The mandate was obeyed; and as Oliver was taken out he fainted away again in the yard, and lay with his face a deadly white and a cold tremble convulsing his frame.

"Poor boy! poor boy!" said Mr. Brownlow, bending over him. "Call a coach, somebody, pray. Directly!"

A coach was obtained, and Oliver, having been carefully laid on one seat, the old gentleman got in and sat himself on the other.

"May I accompany you?" said the book-stall keeper, looking in.

"Bless me, yes, my dear sir," said Mr. Brownlow quickly. "I forgot you. Dear, dear! I have this unhappy book still! Jump in. Poor fellow! There's no time to lose."

The book-stall keeper got into the coach, and it rattled away. It stopped at length before a neat house, in a quiet, shady street. Here a bed was prepared, without loss of time, in which Mr. Brownlow saw his young charge carefully and comfortably deposited; and here he was

tended with a kindness and solicitude that knew no bounds.

At last the sick boy began to recover, and one day Mr. Brownlow came in to see him. You may imagine how happy Oliver was to see his good benefactor; but he was no more delighted than was Mr. Brownlow. The old gentleman came to spend a short time with him every day; and, when he grew stronger, Oliver went up to the learned gentleman's study and talked with him by the hour and was astonished at the books he saw, which Mr. Brownlow told him to look at and read as much as he liked.

Oliver was soon well, and no thought was in Mr. Brownlow's mind but that he should keep him, and raise him and educate him to be a splendid man; for no father loves his own son better than Mr. Brownlow had come to love Oliver.

—*Oliver Twist*

THE FAT BOY

JOE, generally known as "the fat boy," was a servant of an old country gentleman named Wardle. Mr. Pickwick, of London, and three others of his literary club, were traveling in search of adventure. With Mr. Pickwick, the founder and head of the Pickwick club, were Mr. Tupman, whose great weakness for the ladies brought him frequent troubles, Mr. Winkle, whose desire to appear as a sport brought much ridicule upon himself, and Mr. Snodgrass, whose poetic temperament induced him to write many romantic verses which amused his friends and all who read them. These four Pickwickians were introduced one day to Mr. Wardle, his aged sister Miss Rachel Wardle, and his two daughters, Emily and Isabella, as they were observing some army reviews from their coach. Mr. Wardle hospitably asked Mr. Pickwick and his friends to join them in the coach.

"Come up here, Mr. Pickwick," said Mr. Wardle, "come along, sir. Joe! Drat that boy! He's gone to sleep again. Joe, let down the steps and open the carriage door. Come ahead, room for two of you inside and one outside. Joe, make room for one. Put this gentleman on the box!" Mr. Winkle

mounted with a little help, and the fat boy, where he was, fell fast asleep.

One rank of soldiers after another passed, firing over the heads of another rank, and when the cannon went off the air resounded with the screams of ladies. Mr. Snodgrass actually found it necessary to support one of the Misses Wardle with his arm. Their maidenly aunt was in such a dreadful state of nervous alarm that Mr. Tupman found that *he* was obliged to put his arm about *her* waist to keep her up at all. Everyone was excited, with the exception of the fat boy, and he slept as soundly as if the roaring of cannon were his ordinary lullaby.

"Joe! Joe!" called Mr. Wardle. "Drat that boy! He's gone to sleep again. Pinch him in the leg, if you please. Nothing else wakens him. Thank you. Get out the lunch, Joe." The fat boy, who had been effectually aroused by Mr. Winkle, proceeded to unpack the hamper with more quickness than could have been expected from his previous inactivity.

"Now Joe, knives and forks." The knives and forks were handed in, and each one was furnished with these useful implements.

"Now Joe, the fowls. Drat that boy! He's gone asleep again. Joe! Joe!" Numerous taps on the head with a stick, and the fat boy with some difficulty was awakened. "Go hand in the eatables." There was something in the sound of the last word which aroused him. He jumped up with reddened



The Fat Boy takes another nap

eyes which twinkled behind his mountainous cheeks, and feasted upon the food as he unpacked it from the basket.

"Now make haste," said Mr. Wardle, for the fat boy was hanging fondly over a chicken which he seemed wholly unable to part with. The boy sighed deeply, and casting an ardent gaze upon its plumpness, unwillingly handed it to his master.

"A very extraordinary boy, that," said Mr. Pickwick. "Does he always sleep in this way?"

"Sleep!" said the old gentleman. "He's always sleeping. Goes on errands fast asleep and snores as he waits at table."

"How very odd," said Mr. Pickwick.

"Ah! odd indeed," returned the old gentleman. "I'm proud of that boy. Wouldn't part with him on any account. He's a natural curiosity. Here, Joe, take these things away and open another bottle. Do you hear?" The fat boy aroused, opened his eyes, started and finished the piece of pie he was in the act of eating when he last fell asleep, and slowly obeyed his master's orders, looking intently upon the remains of the feast as he removed the plates and stowed them in the hamper. At last Mr. Wardle and his party mounted the coach and prepared to drive off.

"Now mind," he said as he shook hands with Mr. Pickwick, "we expect to see you all tomorrow. You have the address?"

"Manor Farm, Dingley Dell," said Mr. Pickwick, consulting his pocketbook.

"That's it," said the old gentleman. "You must come for at least a week. If you are traveling to get country life, come to me and I will give you plenty of it. Joe! Drat that boy, he's gone to sleep again. Help put in the horses." The horses were put in, and the driver mounted, and that boy clambered up by his side. The farewells were exchanged and the carriage rolled off. As the Pickwickians turned around to take a last glimpse of it, the setting sun cast a red gold upon the faces of their entertainers, and fell upon the form of the fat boy. His head was sunk upon his bosom, and he slumbered again.

Presently Mr. Pickwick and his friends arrived safely at the country home of Mr. Wardle. The time passed very pleasantly.

One day some of the men decided upon a shooting trip, and Mr. Winkle, to maintain his reputation as a sport, did not admit that he knew nothing about guns. Mr. Pickwick, early in the morning, seeing Mr. Winkle carrying a gun, asked what they were going to do.

"Why, your friend and I are going out rook shooting. He's a very good shot, isn't he?" said Mr. Wardle.

"I have heard him say he's a capital one," replied Mr. Pickwick, "but I never saw him aim at anything."

"Well," said the host, "I wish Mr. Tupman would join us. Joe! Joe!" The fat boy who, under the exciting influences of the morning, did not appear to be more than three parts and a fraction asleep, emerged from the house. "Go up and call Mr. Tupman, and tell him he will find us waiting." At last the party started, Mr. Tupman having joined them. Some boys who were with them discovered a tree with a nest in one of the branches and, when all was ready, Mr. Wardle was persuaded to shoot first. The boys shouted, and shook a branch with a nest on it, and a half-a-dozen young rooks, in violent conversation, flew out to ask what the matter was. Mr. Wardle leveled his gun and fired; down fell one and off flew the others.

"Pick him up, Joe," said the old gentleman. There was a smile upon the youth's face as he advanced, for an indistinct vision of rook pie floated through his imagination. He laughed as he retired with the bird. It was a plump one.

"Now, Mr. Winkle," said the host, reloading his own gun, "fire away." Mr. Winkle advanced and raised his gun. Mr. Pickwick and his friends crouched involuntarily to escape damage from the heavy fall of birds which they felt quite certain would be caused by their friend's skill. There was a solemn pause, a shout, a flapping of wings.

Mr. Winkle closed his eyes and fired; there was a scream from an individual, not a rook. Mr. Tup-

man had saved the lives of innumerable birds by receiving a portion of the charge in his left arm. Though it was a very slight wound, Mr. Tupman made a great fuss about it and everyone was horror-stricken. He was partly carried to the house. The spinster aunt uttered a piercing scream, burst into an hysterical laugh and fell backward into the arms of her nieces. She recovered, screamed again, laughed again and fainted again.

"Calm yourself," said Mr. Tupman, affected almost to tears by this expression of sympathy. "Dear, dear Madam, calm yourself."

"You are not dead?" exclaimed the hysterical lady. "Say you are not dead!"

"Don't be a fool, Rachel," said Mr. Wardle. "What the mischief is the use of his saying he isn't dead?"

"No! No! I am not," said Mr. Tupman. "I require no assistance but yours. Let me lean on your arm," he added in a whisper. Miss Rachel advanced and offered her arm. They turned into the breakfast parlor. Mr. Tupman gently pressed her hands to his lips and sunk upon the sofa. Presently the others left him to her tender mercies. That afternoon Mr. Tupman, much affected by the extreme tenderness of Miss Rachel, suggested that as he was feeling much better they take a short stroll in the garden. There was a bower at the farther end, all honeysuckles and creeping plants, and some-

how they unconsciously wandered in its direction and sat down on a bench within.

"Miss Wardle," said Mr. Tupman, "you are an angel." Miss Rachel blushed very becomingly. Much more conversation of this nature followed until finally Mr. Tupman proceeded to do what his enthusiastic emotions prompted and what were (for all we know, for we are but little acquainted with such matters) what people in such circumstances always do. She started, and he, throwing his arms around her neck, imprinted upon her lips numerous kisses, which, after a proper show of struggling and resistance, she received so passively that there is no telling how many more Mr. Tupman might have bestowed if the lady had not given a very unaffected start and exclaimed, "Mr. Tupman, we are observed! We are discovered!"

Mr. Tupman looked around. There was the fat boy perfectly motionless, with his large, circular eyes staring into the arbor, but without the slightest expression on his face. Mr. Tupman gazed at the fat boy and the fat boy stared at him, but the longer Mr. Tupman observed the utter vacancy of the fat boy's face, the more convinced he became that he either did not know or did not understand anything that had been happening. Under this impression he said with great fierceness, "What do you want here?"

"Supper is ready, sir," was the prompt reply.

"Have you just come here?" inquired Mr. Tupman with a piercing look.

"Just," replied the fat boy. Mr. Tupman looked at him very hard again but there was not a wink of his eye or a movement in his face. Mr. Tupman took the arm of the spinster aunt and walked toward the house. The fat boy followed behind.

"He knows nothing of what has happened," he whispered.

"Nothing," said the spinster aunt. There was a sound behind them as of an imperfectly suppressed chuckle. Mr. Tupman turned sharply around.

No, it could not have been the fat boy. There was not a gleam of mirth or anything but feeding in his whole visage. "He must have been fast asleep," whispered Mr. Tupman.

"I have not the least doubt of it," replied Miss Rachel, and they both laughed heartily. Mr. Tupman was wrong. The fat boy for once had not been fast asleep. He was awake, wide awake to everything that had happened.

The day following, Joe saw his mistress, Mr. Wardle's aged mother, sitting in the arbor. Without saying a word he walked up to her, stood perfectly still and said nothing.

The old lady was easily frightened; most old ladies are, and her first impression was that Joe was about to do her some bodily harm with a view of stealing what money she might have with her. She

therefore watched his motions, or rather lack of motions, with feelings of intense terror, which were in no degree lessened by his finally coming close to her and shouting in her ear, for she was very deaf, "Missus!"

"Well, Joe," said the trembling old lady, "I am sure I have been a good mistress to you." He nodded. "You have always been treated very kindly?" He nodded. "You have never had too much to do?" He nodded. "You have always had enough to eat?" This last was an appeal to the fat boy's most sensitive feelings. He seemed touched as he replied, "I know I has."

"Then what do you want to do now?"

"I wants to make yo' flesh creep," replied the boy. This sounded like a very bloodthirsty method of showing one's gratitude, and so the old lady was as much frightened as before. "What do you think I saw in this very arbor last night?" inquired the boy.

"Mercies, what?" screamed the old lady, alarmed at the mysterious manner of the corpulent youth.

"A strange gentleman as had his arm around her, a kissin' and huggin'."

"Who, Joe, who? None of the servants, I hope?"

"Worser than that," roared the fat boy in the old lady's ear.

"None of my granddaughters?"

"Worser than that," said Joe.

"Worse than that?" said the old lady, who had thought this the extreme limit. "Who was it, Joe? I insist upon knowing!"

The fat boy looked cautiously about and having finished his survey, shouted in the old lady's ear, "Miss Rachel!"

"What?" said the old lady in a shrill tone. "Speak louder!"

"Miss Rachel," roared the fat boy.

"My daughter?" The succession of nods which the fat boy gave by way of assent could not be doubted. "And she allowed him?" exclaimed the old lady. A grin stole over the fat boy's features as he said, "I see her a-kissin' of him agin!" Joe's voice of necessity had been so loud that another party in the garden could not help hearing the entire conversation. If they could have seen the expression of the old lady's face at this time it is probable that a sudden burst of laughter would have betrayed them. Fragments of angry sentences drifted to them through the leaves, such as "Without my permission!" "At her time of life!" "Might have waited until I was dead," etc. Then they heard the heels of the fat boy's feet crunching the gravel as he retired and left the old lady alone.

Mr. Tupman would probably have found himself in considerable trouble if one of his friends, who had overheard the conversation, had not told Mrs. Wardle that perhaps Joe had dreamed the entire

incident, which did not seem altogether improbable. She watched Mr. Tupman at supper that evening, but this gentleman, having been warned, paid no attention whatever to Miss Rachel, and the old lady was finally persuaded that it was all a mistake.

Finally the visit of Mr. Pickwick and his friends came to an end, and it was several months before they again partook of Mr. Wardle's hospitality. The Pickwickians had arrived at the Inn near Mr. Wardle's place for dinner before completing the rest of their journey to Dingley Dell. Mr. Pickwick had brought with him several barrels of oysters and some special wine as a gift to his host, and he stood examining his packages to see that they had all arrived when he felt himself gently pulled by the skirts of his coat. Looking around he discovered that the individual who resorted to this means of drawing his attention was no other than Mr. Wardle's favorite page, the fat boy.

"Aha!" said Mr. Pickwick.

"Ah!" said the fat boy, and as he said it he glanced from the wine to the oysters and chuckled joyously. He was fatter than ever.

"Well, you look rosy enough, my young friend," said Mr. Pickwick.

"I have been sitting in front of the fire," replied the fat boy, who had indeed heated himself to the color of a new chimney pot in the course of an hour's nap. "Master sent me over with the cart to carry

your luggage over to the house." Mr. Pickwick called his man, Sam Weller, to him and said, "Help Mr. Wardle's servant to put the packages into the cart and then ride on with him. We prefer to walk." Having given this direction, Mr. Pickwick and his three friends walked briskly away, leaving Mr. Weller and the fat boy face to face for the first time. Sam looked at the fat boy with great astonishment, but without saying a word, and began to put the things rapidly upon the cart while Joe stood calmly by and seemed to think it a very interesting sort of thing to see Mr. Weller working by himself.

"There," said Sam, "everything packed at last. There they are."

"Yes," said the fat boy in a very satisfied tone, "there they are."

"Well, young twenty stone," said Sam, "you're a nice specimen, you are."

"Thankee," said the fat boy.

"You ain't got nothing on your mind as makes you fret yourself, have you?" inquired Sam.

"Not as I knows of," replied the boy.

"I should rather have thought, to look at you, that you was a laborin' under a disappointed love affair with some young ooman," said Sam. "Vell, young boaconstrictor, I'm glad to hear it. Do you ever drink anythin'?"

"I likes eatin' better," replied the boy.

"Ah!" said Sam. "I should ha' 'sposed that,

but I 'spose you were never cold with all them elastic fixtures?"

"Was sometimes," replied the boy, "and I likes a drop of something that's good."

"Ah! you do, do you," said Sam, "come this way." Then after a short interruption they got into the cart.

"You can drive, can you?" said the fat boy.

"I should rather think so," replied Sam.

"Well then," said the fat boy, putting the reins in his hands and pointing up a lane, "it's as straight as you can drive. You can't miss it." With these words the fat boy laid himself affectionately down by the side of the provisions and placing an oyster barrel under his head for a pillow, fell asleep instantly.

"Vell," said Sam, "of all the boys ever I set my eyes on—wake up, young dropsy." But as young dropsy could not be awakened, Sam Weller set himself down in front of the cart, started the old horse with a jerk of the rein, and jogged steadily on toward Manor Farm.

Our friends greatly enjoyed themselves in this happy Christmas gathering. But as the hero of the present story did not participate in any of the celebration, since he divided his entire time during these few days between eating and sleeping, we must leave him for the present and travel ahead several months to the time when the jolly Pickwickians next see his

beaming countenance. Mr. Pickwick was sitting in his room thinking on some of the deep scientific discoveries for which he had become famous, when he was interrupted by a violent and startling knock at his door. It wasn't an ordinary double knock, but a constant and uninterrupted succession of the loudest single raps, as if the person outside had forgotten to leave off. Wondering what it could be, Mr. Pickwick did not at once arise and the knocker continued to hammer with surprising force and without a moment's cessation.

"It is quite dreadful," said Mr. Pickwick. "Make haste and open the door." The servant hurried down and turned the handle. The object that presented itself to his astonished eyes was a wonderfully fat boy. He had never seen such a fat boy, in or out of a traveling circus, and this, together with the utter calmness and repose of his appearance, so strange in one who had been pounding with such fierceness, struck him with wonder. Still more astonishing was the steady mechanical motion of his right arm, which continued to move forward and back like a steam-driven hammer, the rest of his body being absolutely motionless.

"What's the matter?" inquired the servant. This extraordinary boy replied not a word, but he nodded once and seemed to the other's imagination to snore feebly. "Where do you come from?" inquired the servant. The boy made no sign, he breathed heavily.

The question was repeated three times, but receiving no answer, the servant was preparing to shut the door when the boy suddenly opened his eyes, winked several times, sneezed once, and finding the door open he stared about him with the greatest astonishment.

"Why do you knock in that way?" inquired the servant.

"Knocking what way?" said the boy in a slow, sleepy voice.

"Why, like forty coachmen," replied the servant.

"Because the Master said I wasn't to leave off knocking until they opened the door for fear I should go to sleep," said the boy.

"Well, what message have you brought?"

"He's downstairs," replied the boy. "He wants to know whether you are at home."

The servant, beginning to understand, hastened down to the carriage waiting without. At once Mr. Wardle came running upstairs and was soon shaking hands warmly with Mr. Pickwick.

Here we'll leave Dickens' famous fat boy, standing with his eyes shut, pounding away at a door which had already been opened.

—*Pickwick Papers*

DAVID COPPERFIELD

MY name, like my father's before me, is David Copperfield. When I was little, I lived with my mother in a pretty house in the village of Blunderstone in Suffolk. I had never known my father, who died before I could remember anything, and I had neither brothers nor sisters. My pretty young mother, and our kind, good servant, Peggotty, took care of me, and made me very happy. We had few friends, and the only relation my mother talked about was an aunt of my father's, a tall and rather terrible old lady, from all accounts, who had once been to see us when I was quite a tiny baby, and had been so angry to find I was not a little girl that she had left the house quite offended, and had never been heard of since. One visitor, a tall, dark gentleman, I did not like at all, and was rather inclined to be jealous that my mother should be so friendly with the stranger.

Peggotty and I were sitting one night by the parlor fire, alone. I had been reading to Peggotty about crocodiles in a little book that I liked very much. I was tired of reading, and dead sleepy; but having leave, as a high treat, to sit up until my mother came home from spending the evening at a

neighbor's, I would rather have died upon my post (of course) than have gone to bed. I had reached that stage of sleepiness when Peggotty seemed to swell and grow immensely large. I propped my eyelids open with my two forefingers, and looked perseveringly at her as she sat at work; at the little house with a thatched roof, where the yard measure lived; at her work box with a sliding lid, with a view of St. Paul's Cathedral (with a pink dome) painted on the top; at the brass thimble on her finger; at herself, whom I thought lovely. I felt so sleepy that I knew if I lost sight of anything, for a moment, I was gone.

"Peggotty," says I, suddenly, "were you ever married?"

"Lord, Master Davy!" replied Peggotty. "What's put marriage in your head?"

She answered with such a start that it quite awoke me. And then she stopped in her work and looked at me, with her needle drawn out to its thread's length.

"But *were* you ever married, Peggotty?" says I. "You are a very handsome woman, ain't you?"

"Me, handsome, Davy!" said Peggotty. "Lawk, no, my dear! But what put marriage in your head?"

"I don't know. You mayn't marry more than one person at a time, may you, Peggotty?"

"Certainly not," says Peggotty, with the promptest decision.



David Copperfield and Peggotty sat chatting by the parlor fire

"But if you marry a person, and the person dies, why then you may marry another person, mayn't you, Peggotty?"

"You may," says Peggotty, "if you choose, my dear. That's a matter of opinion."

"But what is your opinion, Peggotty?" said I.

I asked her and looked curiously at her, because she looked so curiously at me.

"My opinion is," said Peggotty, taking her eyes from me, after a little indecision, and going on with her work, "that I never was married myself, Master Davy, and that I don't expect to be. That's all I know about the subject."

"You ain't cross, I suppose, Peggotty, are you?" said I, after sitting quiet for a minute.

I really thought she was, she had been so short with me; but I was quite mistaken; for she laid aside her work (which was a stocking of her own) and opening her arms wide, took my curly head within them, and gave it a good squeeze. I know it was a good squeeze, because, being very plump, whenever she made any little exertion after she was dressed, some of the buttons on the back of her gown flew off. And I recollect that two burst to the opposite side of the parlor, while she was hugging me.

One day Peggotty asked me if I would like to go with her on a visit to her brother at Yarmouth.

"Is your brother an agreeable man, Peggotty?" I inquired.

"Oh, what an agreeable man he is!" cried Peggotty. "Then there's the sea, and the boats and ships, and the fishermen, and the beach. And 'Am to play with."

Ham was her nephew. I was quite anxious to go when I heard of all these delights; but my mother, what would she do all alone? Peggotty told me my mother was going to pay a visit to some friends, and would be sure to let me go. So all was arranged, and we were to start the next day in the carrier's cart. I was so eager that I wanted to put my hat and coat on the night before! But when the time came to say good-by to my dear mamma I cried a little, for I had never left her before. It was a rather slow way of traveling, and I was very tired and sleepy when I arrived at Yarmouth, and found Ham waiting to meet me. He was a great strong fellow, six feet high, and took me on his back and the box under his arm to carry both to the house. I was delighted to find that this house was made of a real, big, black boat, that had been drawn far up on the sand. It had a door and windows cut in the side, and an iron funnel sticking out of the roof for a chimney. Inside it was very cozy and clean, and I had a tiny bedroom in the stern. I was very much pleased to find a little girl, about my own age, to play with. After tea I said:

"Mr. Peggotty."

"Sir," says he.

"Did you give your son the name of Ham because you lived in a sort of ark?"

Mr. Peggotty seemed to think it a deep idea, but answered,

"No, sir. I never giv' him no name."

"Who gave him that name, then?" said I, putting question number two of the catechism to Mr. Peggotty.

"Why, sir, his father giv' it him," said Mr. Peggotty.

"I thought you were his father."

"My brother Joe was *his* father," said Mr. Peggotty.

"Dead, Mr. Peggotty?" I hinted, after a respectful pause.

"Drowndead," said Mr. Peggotty.

I was very much surprised that Mr. Peggotty was not Ham's father, and began to wonder whether I was mistaken about his relationship to anybody else there. I was so curious to know that I made up my mind to have it out with Mr. Peggotty.

"Little Em'ly," I said, glancing at her. "She is your daughter, isn't she, Mr. Peggotty?"

"No, sir. My brother-in-law, Tom, was *her* father."

I couldn't help it. "——Dead, Mr. Peggotty?" I hinted, after another respectful silence.

"Drowndead," said Mr. Peggotty.

I felt the difficulty of resuming the subject, but

had not got to the bottom of it yet, and must get to the bottom somehow. So I said:

"Haven't you *any* children, Mr. Peggotty?"

"No, master," he answered, with a short laugh.

"I'm a bachel-dore."

"A bachelor!" I said, astonished. "Why, who's that, Mr. Peggotty?" pointing to the person in the apron who was knitting.

"That's Missis Gummidge," said Mr. Peggotty.

"Gummidge, Mr. Peggotty?"

But at this point Peggotty—I mean my own Peggotty—made such impressive motions to me not to ask any more questions that I could only sit and look at all the company, until it was time to go to bed.

Mrs. Gummidge lived with them, too, and did the cooking and cleaning, for she was a poor widow and had no home of her own. I thought Mr. Peggotty was very good to take all these people to live with him, and I was quite right, for Mr. Peggotty was only a poor man himself and had to work hard to get a living.

Almost as soon as morning shone upon the oyster-shell frame of my mirror I was out of bed, and out with little Em'ly picking up stones upon the beach.

"You're quite a sailor, I suppose?" I said to Em'ly. I don't know that I supposed anything of the kind, but I felt it an act of gallantry to say

something; and a shining sail close to us made such a pretty little image of itself, at the moment, in her bright eye, that it came into my head to say this.

"No," replied Em'ly, shaking her head, "I'm afraid of the sea."

"Afraid!" I said, with a becoming air of boldness, and looking very big at the mighty ocean. "I ain't."

"Ah! but it's cruel," said Em'ly. "I have seen it very cruel to some of our men. I have seen it tear a boat as big as our house all to pieces."

"I hope it wasn't the boat that——"

"That father was drowned in?" said Em'ly.

"No. Not that one. I never saw that boat."

"Nor him?" I asked her.

Little Em'ly shook her head. "Not to remember."

Here was a coincidence! I immediately went into an explanation how I had never seen my own father; and how my mother and I had always lived by ourselves in the happiest state imaginable, and lived so then, and always meant to live so; and how my father's grave was in the churchyard near our house, and shaded by a tree, beneath the boughs of which I had walked and heard the birds sing many a pleasant morning. But there were some differences between Em'ly's orphanhood and mine, it appeared. She had lost her mother before her father, and where her father's grave was no one

knew, except that it was somewhere in the depths of the sea.

"Besides," said Em'ly, as she looked about for shells and pebbles, "your father was a gentleman and your mother is a lady; and my father was a fisherman and my mother was a fisherman's daughter, and my Uncle Dan is a fisherman."

"Dan is Mr. Peggotty, is he?" said I.

"Uncle Dan—yonder," answered Em'ly, nodding at the boat house.

"Yes. I mean him. He must be very good, I should think."

"Good?" said Em'ly. "If I was ever to be a lady I'd give him a sky-blue coat with diamond buttons, nankeen trousers, a red velvet waistcoat, a cocked hat, a large gold watch, a silver pipe, and a box of money."

I said I had no doubt that Mr. Peggotty well deserved these treasures.

Little Em'ly had stopped and looked up at the sky in her enumeration of these articles, as if they were a glorious vision. We went on again, picking up shells and pebbles.

"You would like to be a lady?" I said.

Em'ly looked at me, and laughed and nodded.

"I should like it very much. We would all be gentlefolks together, then. Me, and uncle, and Ham, and Mrs. Gummidge. We wouldn't mind then, when there come stormy weather. Not for our own

sakes, I mean. We would for the poor fishermen's, to be sure, and we'd help 'em with money when they come to any hurt."

I was very sorry to leave these kind people and especially little Em'ly, but still I was glad to think that I should get back to my own home. When I reached it, however, I found a great change. My mother was married to the dark man I did not like, whose name was Mr. Murdstone, and he was a stern, hard man, who had no love for me, and did not allow my mother to pet and indulge me as she had done before. Mr. Murdstone's sister came to live with us, and as she was even more difficult to please than her brother, and disliked boys, my life was no longer a happy one. I tried to be good and obedient, for I knew it made my mother very unhappy to see me punished and found fault with. I had always had lessons with my mother, and as she was patient and gentle, I had enjoyed learning to read, but now I had a great many very hard lessons to do, and was so frightened when Mr. and Miss Murdstone were in the room, that I did not get on at all well, and was continually in disgrace.

Let me remember how it used to be, and bring one morning back again.

I come into the second-best parlor after breakfast, with my books, and an exercise book and a slate. My mother is ready for me at her writing desk, but not half so ready as Mr. Murdstone in his easy

chair by the window (though he pretends to be reading a book), or as Miss Murdstone, sitting near my mother stringing steel beads. The very sight of these two has such an influence over me that I begin to feel the words I have been at infinite pains to get into my head all sliding away, and going, I don't know where. I wonder where they *do* go, by the by?

I hand the first book to my mother. Perhaps it is a grammar, perhaps a history, or a geography. I take a last drowning look at the page as I give it into her hand, and start off aloud at a racing pace while I have got it fresh. I trip over a word. Mr. Murdstone looks up. I trip over another word. Miss Murdstone looks up. I redden, tumble over half a dozen words, and stop. I think my mother would show me the book if she dared, but she does not dare, and she says softly:

"Oh, Davy, Davy!"

"Now, Clara," says Mr. Murdstone, "be firm with the boy. Don't say, 'Oh, Davy, Davy!' That's childish. He knows his lesson, or he does not know it."

"He does *not* know it," Miss Murdstone interposes awfully.

"I am really afraid he does not," says my mother.

"Then you see, Clara," returns Miss Murdstone, "you should just give him the book back, and make him know it."

"Yes, certainly," says my mother, "that is what I intend to do, my dear Jane. Now, Davy, try once more, and don't be stupid."

I obey the first clause of the injunction by trying once more, but am not so successful with the second, for I am very stupid. I tumble down before I get to the old place, at a point where I was all right before, and stop to think. But I can't think about the lesson. I think of the number of yards of net in Miss Murdstone's cap, or of the price of Mr. Murdstone's dressing gown, or any such ridiculous problem that I have no business with, and don't want to have anything at all to do with. Mr. Murdstone makes a movement of impatience which I have been expecting for a long time. Miss Murdstone does the same. My mother glances submissively at them, shuts the book, and lays it by as an arrear to be worked out when my other tasks are done.

There is a pile of these arrears very soon, and it swells like a rolling snowball. The bigger it gets, the more stupid I get. The case is so hopeless, and I feel that I am wallowing in such a bog of nonsense, that I give up all idea of getting out, and abandon myself to my fate. The despairing way in which my mother and I look at each other, as I blunder on, is truly melancholy. But the greatest effect in these miserable lessons is when my mother (thinking nobody is observing her) tries to give me the cue by

the motion of her lips. At that instant, Miss Murdstone, who has been lying in wait for nothing else all along, says in a deep, warning voice:

“Clara!”

My mother starts, colors, and smiles faintly. Mr. Murdstone comes out of his chair, takes the book, and turns me out of the room by the shoulders.

Day by day went along in this fashion. My only pleasure was to go up into a little room at the top of the house where I had found a number of books that had belonged to my own father, and I would sit and read about Robinson Crusoe, and many tales of travels and adventures, and I imagined myself to be sometimes one and sometimes another hero, and went about for days with the centerpiece out of an old set of boot-trees, pretending to be a captain in the British Royal Navy.

One morning when I went into the parlor with my books, I found my mother looking anxious, Miss Murdstone looking firm, and Mr. Murdstone binding something round the bottom of a cane—a lithe and limber cane, which he left off binding when I came in, and poised and switched it threateningly in the air.

“I tell you, Clara,” said Mr. Murdstone, “I have often been flogged myself.”

“To be sure; of course,” said Miss Murdstone.

“Certainly, my dear Jane,” faltered my mother, meekly. “But do you think it did Edward good?”

"Do you think it did Edward harm, Clara?" asked Mr. Murdstone, gravely.

"That's the point!" said his sister.

To this my mother returned, "Certainly, my dear Jane," and said no more.

I felt apprehensive that I was personally interested in this dialogue, and sought Mr. Murdstone's eye as it lighted on mine.

"Now, David," he said, "you must be far more careful today than usual." He gave the cane another poise and another switch; and having finished his preparation of it, laid it down beside him, with an expressive look, and took up his book.

This was a good freshener to my presence of mind, so a beginning. I felt the words of my lessons slipping off, not one by one, or line by line, but by the entire page. I tried to lay hold of them; but they seemed, if I may so express it, to have put skates on, and to skim away from me with a smoothness of which there was no checking.

We began badly, and went on worse. I had come in with an idea of distinguishing myself rather, conceiving that I was very well prepared; but it turned out to be quite a mistake. Book after book was added to the heap of failures, Miss Murdstone being firmly watchful of us all the time. And when we came at last to the five thousand cheeses (canes he made it that day, I remember), my mother burst out crying.

"Clara!" said Miss Murdstone, in her warning voice.

"I am not quite well, my dear Jane, I think," said my mother.

I saw him wink, solemnly, at his sister, as he rose and said, taking up the cane:

"Why, Jane, we can hardly expect Clara to bear, with perfect firmness, the worry and torment that David has occasioned her today. Clara is greatly strengthened and improved, but we can hardly expect so much from her. David, you and I will go upstairs, boy."

As he took me out at the door, my mother ran toward us. Miss Murdstone said, "Clara! are you a perfect fool?" and interfered. I saw my mother stop her ears then, and I heard her crying.

He walked me up to my room slowly and gravely—I am certain he had a delight in that formal parade of executing justice—and when we got there, suddenly twisted my head under his arm.

"Mr. Murdstone! Sir!" I cried to him. "Don't! Pray don't beat me! I have tried to learn, sir, but I can't learn while you and Miss Murdstone are by. I can't, indeed!"

"Can't you, indeed, David?" he said. "We'll try that."

He had my head as in a vise, but I twined round him somehow, and stopped him for a moment, entreating him not to beat me. It was only for a

moment that I stopped him, for he cut me heavily an instant afterwards, and in the same instant I caught the hand with which he held me in my mouth, between my teeth, and bit it through. It sets my teeth on edge to think of it.

He beat me then, as if he would have beaten me to death. Above all the noise we made, I heard them running up the stairs, and crying out—I heard my mother crying out—and Peggotty. Then he was gone; and the door was locked outside; and I was lying, fevered and hot, and torn, and sore, and raging in my puny way, upon the floor.

How well I recollect, when I became quiet, what an unnatural stillness seemed to reign through the whole house! How well I remember, when my smart and passion began to cool, how wicked I began to feel!

I sat listening for a long while, but there was not a sound. I crawled up from the floor, and saw my face in the glass, so swollen, red, and ugly that it almost frightened me. My stripes were sore and stiff, and made me cry afresh, when I moved; but they were nothing to the guilt I felt. It lay heavier on my breast than if I had been a most atrocious criminal, I dare say.

It had begun to grow dark, and I had shut the window (I had been lying, for the most part, with my head upon the sill, by turns crying, dozing, and looking listlessly out), when the key was turned,

and Miss Murdstone came in with some bread and meat and milk. These she put down upon the table without a word, glaring at me the while with exemplary firmness, and then retired, locking the door after her.

I never shall forget the waking, next morning; the being cheerful and fresh for the first moment, and then the being weighed down by the stale and dismal oppression of remembrance. Miss Murdstone reappeared before I was out of bed; told me, in so many words, that I was free to walk in the garden for half an hour and no longer; and retired, leaving the door open, that I might avail myself of that permission.

I did so, and did so every morning of my imprisonment, which lasted five days. If I could have seen my mother alone, I should have gone down on my knees to her and besought her forgiveness; but I saw no one, Miss Murdstone excepted, during the whole time.

The length of those five days I can convey no idea of to anyone. They occupy the place of years in my remembrance.

On the last night of my restraint, I was awakened by hearing my own name spoken in a whisper. I started up in bed, and, putting out my arms in the dark, said:

“Is that you, Peggotty?”

There was no immediate answer, but presently

I heard my name again, in a tone so very mysterious and awful, that I think I should have gone into a fit, if it had not occurred to me that it must have come through the keyhole.

I groped my way to the door, and, putting my own lips to the keyhole, whispered:

“Is that you, Peggotty, dear?”

“Yes, my own precious Davy,” she replied. “Be as soft as a mouse, or the cat’ll hear us.”

I understood this to mean Miss Murdstone, and was sensible of the urgency of the case, her room being close by.

“How’s mamma, dear Peggotty? Is she very angry with me?”

I could hear Peggotty crying softly on her side of the keyhole, as I was doing on mine, before she answered, “No. Not very.”

“What is going to be done with me, Peggotty, dear? Do you know?”

“School. Near London,” was Peggotty’s answer. I was obliged to get her to repeat it, for she spoke it the first time quite down my throat in consequence of my having forgotten to take my mouth away from the keyhole and put my ear there; and, though her words tickled me a good deal, I didn’t hear them.

“When, Peggotty?”

“Tomorrow.”

“Is that the reason why Miss Murdstone took

the clothes out of my drawers?" which she had done, though I had forgotten to mention it.

"Yes," said Peggotty. "Box."

"Shan't I see mamma?"

"Yes," said Peggotty. "Morning."

Then Peggotty fitted her mouth close to the keyhole, and delivered these words through it with as much feeling and earnestness as a keyhole has ever been the medium of communicating, I will venture to assert, shooting in each broken little sentence in a convulsive little burst of its own.

"Davy, dear. If I ain't been azackly as intimate with you. Lately, as I used to be. It ain't because I don't love you. Just as well and more, my pretty poppet. It's because I thought it better for you. And for someone else besides. Davy, my darling, are you listening? Can you hear?"

"Ye—ye—ye—yes, Peggotty," I sobbed.

"My own!" said Peggotty, with infinite compassion. "What I want to say, is. That you must never forget me. For I'll never forget you. And I'll take as much care of your mamma, Davy, as I ever took of you. And I won't leave her. The day may come when she'll be glad to lay her poor head on her stupid, cross old Peggotty's arm again. And I'll write to you, my dear, though I ain't no scholar. And I'll—I'll—" Peggotty fell to kissing the keyhole, as she couldn't kiss me.



David Copperfield leaves home in the
carrier's cart

"Thank you, dear Peggotty," said I. "Oh, thank you! Thank you! Will you promise me one thing, Peggotty? Will you write and tell Mr. Peggotty and little Em'ly and Mrs. Gummidge and Ham that I am not so bad as they might suppose, and that I sent 'em all my love—especially to little Em'ly? Will you, if you please, Peggotty?"

The kind soul promised, and we both of us kissed the keyhole with the greatest affection—I patted it with my hand, I recollect, as if it had been her honest face—and parted.

In the morning Miss Murdstone appeared as usual, and told me I was going to school; which was not altogether such news to me as she supposed. She also informed me that when I was dressed, I was to come downstairs into the parlor and have my breakfast. There I found my mother, very pale and with red eyes; into whose arms I ran, and begged her pardon from my suffering soul.

"Oh, Davy!" she said. "That you could hurt anyone I love! Try to be better, pray to be better! I forgive you; but I am so grieved, Davy, that you should have such bad passions in your heart."

Miss Murdstone was good enough to take me out to the cart, and to say on the way that she hoped I would repent, before I came to a bad end; and then I got into the cart, and the lazy horse walked off with it.

DAVID COPPERFIELD

We might have gone about half a mile, and my pocket handkerchief was quite wet through, when the carrier stopped short.

Looking out to ascertain for what, I saw, to my amazement, Peggotty burst from a hedge and climb into the cart. She took me in both her arms and squeezed me until the pressure on my nose was extremely painful, though I never thought of that until afterwards, when I found it very tender. Not a single word did Peggotty speak. Releasing one of her arms, she put it down in her pocket to the elbow, and brought out some paper bags of cakes, which she crammed into my pockets, and a purse which she put into my hand, but not one word did she say. After another and a final squeeze with both arms, she got down from the cart and ran away; and my belief is, and has always been, without a solitary button on her gown. I picked up one, of several that were rolling about, and treasured it as a keepsake for a long time.

The carrier looked at me, as if to inquire if she were coming back. I shook my head, and said I thought not. "Then come up!" said the carrier to the lazy horse, who came up accordingly.

Having by this time cried as much as I possibly could, I began to think it was of no use crying any more, especially as neither Roderick Random nor that captain in the Royal British Navy had ever cried, that I could remember, in trying situations.

The carrier seeing me in this resolution, proposed that my pocket handkerchief should be spread upon the horse's back to dry. I thanked him and assented; and particularly small it looked under those circumstances.

I had now leisure to examine the purse. It was a stiff leather purse, with a snap, and had three bright shillings in it, which Peggotty had evidently polished up with whitening, for my greater delight. But its precious contents were two half-crowns folded together in a bit of paper, on which was written in my mother's hand, "For Davy. With my love." I was so overcome by this, that I asked the carrier to be so good as to reach me my pocket handkerchief again, but he said he thought I had better do without it; and I thought I really had, so I wiped my eyes on my sleeve and stopped myself.

For good, too; though in consequence of my previous emotions, I was still occasionally seized with a stormy sob. After we had jogged on for some little time, I asked the carrier if he was going all the way.

"All the way where?" inquired the carrier.

"There," I said.

"Where's there?" inquired the carrier.

"Near London," I said.

"Why, that horse," said the carrier, jerking the rein to point him out, "would be deader than pork afore he got over half the ground."

"Are you only going to Yarmouth?" I asked.

"That's about it," said the carrier. "And there I shall take you to the stagecutch, and the stagecutch that'll take you to—wherever it is."

I shared my cakes with the carrier, who asked if Peggotty made them, and I told him yes, she did all our cooking. The carrier looked thoughtful, and then asked if I would send a message to Peggotty from him. I agreed, and the message was "Barkis is willing." While I was waiting for the coach at Yarmouth, I wrote to Peggotty:

"MY DEAR PEGGOTTY: I have come here safe. Barkis is willing. My love to mamma. Yours affectionately.

"P. S. He says he particularly wanted you to know *Barkis is willing*."

At Yarmouth I found dinner was ordered for me, and felt very shy at having a table all to myself, and very much alarmed when the waiter told me he had seen a gentleman fall down dead after drinking some of their beer. I said I would have some water, and was quite grateful to the waiter for drinking the ale that had been ordered for me, for fear the people of the hotel should be offended. He also helped me to eat my dinner, and accepted one of my bright shillings.

After a long, tiring journey by the coach, for there were no trains in those days, I arrived in London and was taken to the school at Blackheath by one of the masters, Mr. Mell.

I gazed upon the schoolroom into which he took me as the most forlorn and desolate place I had ever seen. I see it now, a long room, with three long rows of desks, and six of forms, and bristling all round with pegs for hats and slates. Scraps of old copy books and exercises littered the dirty floor.

Mr. Mell having left me, I went softly to the upper end of the room, observing all this as I crept along. Suddenly I came upon a pasteboard placard, beautifully written, which was lying on the desk, and bore these words, "*Take care of him. He bites.*"

I got upon the desk immediately, apprehensive of at least a great dog underneath. But, though I looked all round with anxious eyes, I could see nothing of him. I was still engaged in peering about when Mr. Mell came back and asked me what I did up there.

"I beg your pardon, sir," says I, "if you please, I'm looking for the dog."

"Dog," says he. "What dog?"

"Isn't it a dog, sir?"

"Isn't what a dog?"

"That's to be taken care of, sir; that bites."

"No, Copperfield," says he, gravely, "that's not a dog. That's a boy. My instructions are, Copperfield, to put this placard on your back. I am sorry to make such a beginning with you, but I must do it."

With that, he took me down, and tied the placard, which was neatly constructed for the purpose,

on my shoulders like a knapsack; and wherever I went, afterwards, I carried it.

What I suffered from that placard, nobody can imagine. Whether it was possible for people to see me or not, I always fancied that somebody was reading it. It was no relief to turn round and find nobody; for wherever my back was, there I imagined somebody always to be.

There was an old door in this playground, on which the boys had a custom of carving their names. It was completely covered with such inscriptions. In my dread of the end of the vacation and their coming back, I could not read one boy's name, without inquiring of myself in what tone and with what emphasis *he* would read, "Take care of him. He bites."

There was one boy—a certain J. Steerforth—who cut his name very deep and very often, who, I conceived, would read it in a rather strong voice, and afterward pull my hair. There was another boy, one Tommy Traddles, who I dreaded would make game of it, and pretend to be dreadfully frightened of me. There was a third, George Dimple, who I fancied would sing it. I have looked, a little shrinking creature, at that door, until the owners of all the names—there were five-and-forty of them in the school then, Mr. Mell said—seemed to send me to Coventry by general acclamation, and to cry out, each in his own way, "Take care of him. He bites!"

Tommy Traddles was the first boy who returned. He introduced himself by informing me that I should find his name on the right-hand corner of the gate, over the top bolt; upon that I said, "Traddles?" to which he replied, "The same," and then he asked me for a full account of myself and family.

It was a happy circumstance for me that Traddles came back first. He enjoyed my placard so much that he saved me from the embarrassment of either disclosure or concealment, by presenting me to every other boy who came back, great or small, immediately on his arrival, in this form of introduction, "Look here! Here's a game!" Happily, too, the greater part of the boys came back low-spirited, and were not so boisterous at my expense as I had expected. Some of them certainly did dance about me like wild Indians, and the greater part could not resist the temptation of pretending that I was a dog, and patting and smoothing me lest I should bite, and saying, "Lie down, sir!" and calling me Towzer. This was naturally confusing, among so many strangers, and cost me some tears, but on the whole it was much better than I had anticipated.

I was not considered as being formally received into the school, however, until J. Steerforth arrived. Before this boy, who was reputed to be a great scholar, and was very good-looking, and at least half-a-dozen years my senior, I was carried as before a magistrate. He inquired, under a shed in the

playground, into the particulars of my punishment, and was pleased to express his opinion that it was a "jolly shame"; for which I became bound to him ever afterwards.

"What money have you got, Copperfield?" he said, walking aside with me when he had disposed of my affair in these terms.

I told him seven shillings.

"You had better give it to me to take care of," he said. "At least, you can, if you like. You needn't if you don't like."

I hastened to comply with his friendly suggestion, and, opening Peggotty's purse, turned it upside down into his hand.

"Do you want to spend anything now?" he asked me.

"No, thank you," I replied.

"You can, if you like, you know," said Steerforth. "Say the word."

"No, thank you, sir," I repeated.

"Perhaps you'd like to spend a couple of shillings or so in a bottle of currant wine by and by, up in the bedroom?" said Steerforth. "You belong to my bedroom, I find."

It certainly had not occurred to me before, but I said, "Yes, I should like that."

"Very good," said Steerforth. "You'll be glad to spend another shilling or so in almond cakes, I dare say?"

I said, "Yes, I should like that, too."

"And another shilling or so in biscuits, and another in fruit, eh?" said Steerforth. "I say, young Copperfield, you're going it!"

I smiled because he smiled, but I was a little troubled in my mind, too.

"Well!" said Steerforth. "We must make it stretch as far as we can; that's all. I'll do the best in my power for you. I can go out when I like, and I'll smuggle the prog in." With these words he put the money in his pocket, and kindly told me not to make myself uneasy; he would take care it should be all right.

He was as good as his word, if that were all right, which I had a secret misgiving was nearly all wrong—for I feared it was a waste of my mother's two half-crowns—though I had preserved the piece of paper they were wrapped in, which was a precious saving. When we went upstairs to bed, he produced the whole seven shillings' worth, and laid it out on my bed in the moonlight, saying:

"There you are, young Copperfield, and a royal spread you've got!"

I couldn't think of doing the honors of the feast at my time of life, while he was by; my hand shook at the very thought of it. I begged him to do me the favor of presiding; and my request being seconded by the other boys who were in that room, he acceded to it, and sat upon my pillow, handing round the

viands—with perfect fairness, I must say—and dispensing the currant wine in a little glass without a foot, which was his own property. As to me, I sat on his left hand, and the rest were grouped about us, on the nearest beds and on the floor.

How well I recollect our sitting there, talking in whispers; or their talking, and my respectfully listening, I ought rather to say; the moonlight falling a little way into the room, through the window, painting a pale window on the floor, and the greater part of us in shadow, except when Steerforth dipped a match into a phosphorus box, when he wanted to look for anything on the board, and shed a blue glare over us that was gone directly. A certain mysterious feeling, consequent on the darkness, the secrecy of the revel, and the whisper in which everything was said, steals over me again. I listen to all they tell me, with a vague feeling of solemnity and awe, which makes me glad they are all so near, and frightens me (though I feign to laugh) when Traddles pretends to see a ghost in the corner.

I heard all kinds of things about the school and all belonging to it. I heard that Mr. Creakle was the sternest and most severe of masters; that he laid about him, right and left, every day of his life, charging in among the boys like a trooper, and slashing away, unmercifully.

I heard that the man with the wooden leg, whose name was Tungay, was an obstinate barbarian who

had formerly assisted in the hop business, but had come into the line with Mr. Creakle, in consequence, as was supposed among the boys, of his having broken his leg in Mr. Creakle's service, and having done a deal of dishonest work for him, and knowing his secrets.

But the greatest wonder that I heard of Mr. Creakle was there being one boy in the school on whom he never ventured to lay a hand, and that boy being J. Steerforth. Steerforth himself confirmed this when it was stated, and said that he should like to begin to see him do it. On being asked by a mild boy (not me) how he would proceed if he did begin to see him do it, he dipped a match into his phosphorus box on purpose to shed a glare over his reply, and said he would commence with knocking him down with a blow on the forehead from the seven-and-six-penny ink bottle that was always on the mantelpiece. We sat in the dark for some time, breathless.

I heard that Miss Creakle was regarded by the school in general as being in love with Steerforth; and I am sure, as I sat in the dark, thinking of his nice voice, and his fine face, and his easy manner, and his curling hair, I thought it very likely. I heard that Mr. Mell was not a bad sort of fellow, but hadn't a sixpence to bless himself with; and that there was no doubt that old Mrs. Mell, his mother, was as poor as Job.

One day, Traddles (the most unfortunate boy in the world) breaks a window accidentally with a ball. I shudder at this moment with the tremendous sensation of seeing it done, and feeling that the ball has bounded on to Mr. Creakle's sacred head.

Poor Traddles! In a tight sky-blue suit that made his arms and legs like German sausages, or roly-poly puddings, he was the merriest and most miserable of all the boys. He was always being caned—I think he was caned every day that half-year, except one holiday Monday, when he was only rulered on both hands—and was always going to write to his uncle about it, and never did. After laying his head on the desk for a little while, he would cheer up somehow, begin to laugh again, and draw skeletons all over his slate before his eyes were dry. I used at first to wonder what comfort Traddles found in drawing skeletons. But I believe he only did it because they were easy, and didn't want any features.

He was very honorable, Traddles was; and held it as a solemn duty in the boys to stand by one another. He suffered for this on several occasions; and particularly once, when Steerforth laughed in church, and the beadle thought it was Traddles, and took him out. I see him now, going away in custody, despised by the congregation. He never said who was the real offender, though he smarted for it next day, and was imprisoned so many hours that

he came forth with a whole churchyard full of skeletons swarming all over his Latin Dictionary. But he had his reward. Steerforth said there was nothing of the sneak in Traddles, and we all felt that to be the highest praise. For my part, I could have gone through a great deal (though I was much less brave than Traddles, and nothing like so old) to have won such a recompense.

To see Steerforth walk to church before us, arm in arm with Miss Creakle, was one of the great sights of my life. I didn't think Miss Creakle equal to little Em'ly in point of beauty, and I didn't love her (I didn't dare); but I thought her a young lady of extraordinary attractions, and in point of gentility not to be surpassed. When Steerforth, in white trousers, carried her parasol for her, I felt proud to know him; and believed that she could not choose but adore him with all her heart. Mr. Sharp and Mr. Mell were both notable personages in my eyes; but Steerforth was to them what the sun was to two stars.

An accidental circumstance cemented the intimacy between Steerforth and me, in a manner that inspired me with great pride and satisfaction, though it sometimes led to inconvenience. It happened on one occasion, when he was doing me the honor of talking to me in the playground, that I hazarded the observation that something or somebody, I forget what now, was like something or somebody in Peregrine Pickle. He said nothing at the time; but when

I was going to bed at night, asked me if I had got that book.

I told him no, and explained how it was that I had read it, and all those other books of which I had made mention.

“And do you recollect them?” Steerforth said.

“Oh, yes,” I replied. I had a good memory, and I believed I recollected them very well.

“Then I tell you what, young Copperfield,” said Steerforth, “you shall tell ’em to me. I can’t get to sleep very early at night, and I generally wake rather early in the morning. We’ll go over ’em one after another. We’ll make some regular Arabian Nights of it.”

I felt extremely flattered by this arrangement, and we commenced carrying it into execution that very evening.

Steerforth showed his consideration in one particular instance, in an unflinching manner that was a little tantalizing, I suspect, to poor Traddles and the rest. Peggotty’s promised letter—what a comfortable letter it was!—arrived before “the half” was many weeks old; and with it a cake in a perfect nest of oranges, and two bottles of cowslip wine. This treasure, as in duty bound, I laid at the feet of Steerforth, and begged him to dispense.

“Now, I’ll tell you what, young Copperfield,” said he, “the wine shall be kept to wet your whistle when you are story-telling.”

I blushed at the idea, and begged him, in my modesty, not to think of it. But he said he had observed I was sometimes hoarse, a little rousy was his exact expression, and it should be, every drop, devoted to the purpose he had mentioned. Accordingly, it was locked up in his box, and drawn off by himself in a phial, and administered to me through a piece of quill in the cork, when I was supposed to be in want of a restorative. Sometimes, to make it a more sovereign specific, he was so kind as to squeeze orange juice into it, or to stir it up with ginger, or dissolve a peppermint drop in it.

We seem to me to have been months over *Peregrine*, and months more over the other stories. The institution never flagged for want of a story, I am certain; and the wine lasted out almost as well as the matter. Poor Traddles—I never think of that boy but with a strange disposition to laugh, and with tears in my eyes—was a sort of chorus, in general; and affected to be convulsed with mirth at the comic parts, and to be overcome with fear when there was any passage of an alarming character in the narrative. This rather put me out very often. It was a great jest of his, I recollect, to pretend that he couldn't keep his teeth from chattering, whenever mention was made of an Alguazil in connection with the adventures of *Gil Blas*; and I remember when *Gil Blas* met the captain of the robbers in Madrid, this unlucky joker counterfeited such an ague of terror that

he was overheard by Mr. Creakle, who was prowling about the passage, and handsomely flogged for disorderly conduct in the bedroom.

One day I had a visit from Mr. Peggotty and Ham, who had brought two enormous lobsters, a huge crab, and a large canvas bag of shrimps, as they "remembered I was partial to a relish with my meals."

I was proud to introduce my friend Steerforth to these kind, simple friends, and told them how good Steerforth was to me, and how he helped me with my work and took care of me, and Steerforth delighted the fishermen with his friendly, pleasant manners.

The "relish" was much appreciated by the boys at supper that night. Only poor Traddles became very ill from eating crab so late.

At last the holidays came, and I went home. The carrier, Barkis, met me at Yarmouth, and was rather gruff, which I soon found out was because he had not had any answer to his message. I promised to ask Peggotty for one.

Ah, what a strange feeling it was to be going home when it was not home, and to find that every object I looked at reminded me of the happy old home, which was like a dream I could never dream again!

God knows how infantine the memory may have been that was awakened within me by the sound of

my mother's voice in the old parlor, when I set foot in the hall.

I believed, from the solitary and thoughtful way in which my mother murmured her song, that she was alone. And I went softly into the room. She was sitting by the fire, nursing an infant, whose tiny hand she held against her neck. Her eyes were looking down upon its face, and she sat singing to it. I was so far right, that she had no other companion.

I spoke to her, and she started, and cried out. But seeing me, she called me her dear Davy, her own boy; and coming half across the room to meet me, kneeled down upon the ground and kissed me, and laid my head down on her bosom near the little creature that was nestling there, and put its hand up to my lips.

"He is your brother," said my mother, fondling me. "Davy, my pretty boy! My poor child!" Then she kissed me more and more, and clasped me round the neck. This she was doing when Peggotty came running in, and bounced down on the ground beside us and went mad about us both for a quarter of an hour.

We had a very happy afternoon the day I came. Mr. and Miss Murdstone were out, and I sat with my mother and Peggotty, and told them all about my school and Steerforth, and took the little baby in my arms and nursed it lovingly. But when the Murdstones came back I was more unhappy than ever.

I felt uncomfortable about going down to breakfast in the morning, as I had never set eyes on Mr. Murdstone since the day when I committed my memorable offense. However, as it must be done, I went down, after two or three false starts halfway, and as many runs back on tiptoe to my own room, and presented myself in the parlor.

He was standing before the fire with his back to it, while Miss Murdstone made the tea. He looked at me steadily as I entered, but made no sign of recognition whatever.

I went up to him, after a moment of confusion, and said, "I beg your pardon, sir. I am very sorry for what I did, and I hope you will forgive me."

"I am glad to hear you are sorry, David," he replied.

The hand he gave me was the hand I had bitten. I could not restrain my eye from resting for an instant on a red spot upon it.

"How do you do, ma'am?" I said to Miss Murdstone.

"Ah, dear me!" sighed Miss Murdstone, giving me the tea-caddy scoop instead of her fingers. "How long are the holidays?"

"A month, ma'am."

"Counting from when?"

"From today, ma'am."

"Oh!" said Miss Murdstone. "Then here's *one* day off."

She kept a calendar of the holidays in this way, and every morning checked a day off in exactly the same manner. She did it gloomily until she came to ten, but when she got into two figures she became more hopeful, and, as the time advanced, even jocular.

Thus the holidays lagged away, until the morning came when Miss Murdstone said, 'Here's the last day off!' and gave me the closing cup of tea of the vacation.

I was not sorry to go. Again Mr. Barkis appeared at the gate, and again Miss Murdstone in her warning voice said, "Clara!" when my mother bent over me to bid me farewell.

I kissed her and my baby brother; it is not so much the embrace she gave me that lives in my mind, though it was as fervent as could be, as what followed the embrace.

I was in the carrier's cart when I heard her calling to me. I looked out, and she stood at the garden gate alone, holding her baby up in her arms for me to see. It was cold, still weather; and not a hair of her head, or fold of her dress, was stirred, as she looked intently at me, holding up her child.

So I lost her. So I saw her afterwards, in my sleep at school, a silent presence near my bed, looking at me with the same intent face, holding up her baby in her arms.

About two months after I had been back at school I was sent for one day to go into the parlor. I hur-

ried joyfully, for it was my birthday, and I thought it might be a hamper from Peggotty, but alas! no. It was very sad news Mrs. Creakle had to give me—my dear mamma had died! Mrs. Creakle was very kind and gentle to me, and the boys, especially Traddles, were very sorry for me.

I went home the next day, and heard that the dear baby had died too. Peggotty received me with great tenderness, and told me about my mother's illness and how she had sent a loving message to me.

"Tell my dearest boy that his mother, as she lay here, blessed him not once, but a thousand times," and she had prayed to God to protect and keep her fatherless boy.

Mr. Murdstone did not take any notice of me, nor had Miss Murdstone a word of kindness for me. Peggotty was to leave in a month, and, to my great joy, I was allowed to go with her on a visit to Mr. Peggotty. On our way I found out that the mysterious message I had given to Peggotty meant that Barkis wanted to marry her, and Peggotty had consented. Everyone in Mr. Peggotty's cottage was pleased to see me, and tried to comfort me. Little Em'ly was at school when I arrived, and I went out to meet her. I knew the way by which she would come, and presently found myself strolling along the path to meet her.

A figure appeared in the distance before long, and I soon knew it to be Em'ly, who was a little

creature still in stature, though she was grown. But when she drew nearer, and I saw her blue eyes looking bluer, and her dimpled face looking brighter, and her own self prettier and gayer, a curious feeling came over me that made me pretend not to know her, and pass by as if I were looking at something a long way off. I have done such a thing since in later life, or I am mistaken.

Little Em'ly didn't care a bit. She saw me well enough; but instead of turning round and calling after me, ran away laughing. This obliged me to run after her, and she ran so fast that we were very near the cottage before I caught her.

"Oh, it's you, is it?" said little Em'ly.

"Why, you knew who it was, Em'ly," said I.

"And didn't *you* know who it was?" said Em'ly. I was going to kiss her, but she covered her cherry lips with her hands, and said she wasn't a baby now, and ran away, laughing more than ever, into the house.

She seemed to delight in teasing me, which was a change in her I wondered at very much. The tea table was ready, and our little locker was put out in its old place, but instead of coming to sit by me, she went and bestowed her company upon that grumbling Mrs. Gummidge; and on Mr. Peggotty's inquiring why, rumbled her hair all over her face to hide it, and would do nothing but laugh.

"A little puss it is!" said Mr. Peggotty, patting her with his great hand.

"Ah," said Mr. Peggotty, running his fingers through her bright curls, "here's another orphan, you see, sir, and here," giving Ham a back-handed knock in the chest, "is another of 'em, though he don't look much like it."

"If I had *you* for a guardian, Mr. Peggotty," said I, "I don't think I should *feel* much like it."

Em'ly was confused by our all observing her, and hung down her head, and her face was covered with blushes. Glancing up presently through her stray curls, and seeing that we were all looking at her still (I am sure I, for one, could have looked at her for hours), she ran away and kept away till it was nearly bedtime.

I lay down in the old little bed in the stern of the boat, and the wind came moaning on across the flat as it had done before. But I could not help fancying now that it moaned of those who were gone; and instead of thinking that the sea might rise in the night and float the boat away, I thought of the sea that had risen, since I last heard those sounds, and drowned my happy home. I recollect, as the wind and water began to sound fainter in my ears, putting a short clause into my prayers, petitioning that I might grow up to marry little Em'ly, and so dropping lovingly asleep.

During this visit Peggotty was married to Mr. Barkis, and had a nice little house of her own, and I spent the night before I was to return home in a little room in the roof.

“Young or old, Davy dear, so long as I have this house over my head,” said Peggotty, “you shall find it as if I expected you here directly every minute. I shall keep it as I used to keep your old little room, my darling, and if you was to go to China you might think of its being kept just the same all the time you were away.”

I felt how good and true a friend she was, and thanked her as well as I could, for they had brought me to the gate of my home, and Peggotty had me clasped in her arms.

I was poor and lonely at home, with no one near to speak a loving word, or a face to look on with love or liking, only the two persons who had broken my mother's heart. How utterly wretched and forlorn I felt! I found I was not to go back to school any more, and wandered about sad and solitary, neglected and uncared for. Peggotty's weekly visits were my only comfort. I longed to go to school, however hard a one, to be taught something anyhow, anywhere; but no one took any pains with me, and I had no friends near who could help me.

At last one day, after some weary months had passed, Mr. Murdstone told me I was to go to London and earn my own living. There was a place for me at Murdstone & Grinby's, a firm in the wine trade. My lodging and clothes would be provided for me by my stepfather, and I would earn enough for my food and pocket money. The next day I was

sent up to London with the manager, dressed in a shabby little white hat with black crepe round it for my mother, a black jacket, and hard, stiff corduroy trousers, a little fellow of ten years old, to fight my own battles with the world.

My place, I found, was one of the lowest in the firm of Murdstone & Grinby, with boys of no education and in quite an inferior station to my own; my duties were to wash the bottles, stick on labels, and so on. I was utterly miserable at being degraded in this way, when I thought of my former companions, Steerforth and Traddles, and my hopes of becoming a learned and distinguished man, and shed bitter tears, as I feared I would forget all I had learned at school. My lodging, one bare little room, was in the house of some people named Micawber, shiftless, careless, good-natured people, who were always in debt and difficulties. I felt great pity for their misfortunes and did what I could to help poor Mrs. Micawber to sell her books and other little things she could spare, to buy food for herself, her husband, and their four children. I was too young and childish to know how to provide properly for myself, and often found I was obliged to live on bread and slices of cold pudding at the end of the week.

The troubles of the Micawbers increased more and more, until at last they were obliged to leave London. I was very sad at this, for I had been with them so long that I felt they were my friends, and the

prospect of being once more utterly alone, and having to find a lodging with strangers, made me so unhappy that I determined to endure this sort of life no longer.

The last Sunday the Micawbers were in town I dined with them. I had bought a spotted horse for their little boy and a doll for the little girl, and had saved up a shilling for the poor servant girl. After I had seen them off the next morning by the coach, I wrote to Peggotty to ask her if she knew where my aunt, Miss Betsey Trotwood, lived, and to borrow half-a-guinea; for I had resolved to run away from Murdstone & Grinby's, and go to this aunt and tell her my story.

I remembered my mother's telling me of her visit when I was a baby, and that she fancied Miss Betsey had stroked her hair gently, and this memory gave me courage to appeal to her. Peggotty wrote, enclosing the half-guinea, and saying she only knew Miss Trotwood lived near Dover, but whether in that place itself or at Folkestone, Sandgate, or Hythe, she could not tell. Hearing that all these places were close together, I made up my mind to start. As I had received my week's wages in advance, I waited till the following Saturday, thinking it would not be honest to go before. I went out to look for someone to carry my box to the coach office, and the man turned out to be a thief, who not only ran off with the box, but robbed me of my half-guinea, leaving me in dire distress.

In despair, I started off to walk to Dover, and was forced to sell my waistcoat to buy some bread. The first night I found my way to my old school at Blackheath, and slept on a haystack close by, feeling some comfort in the thought that the boys were near. I knew Steerforth had left, or I would have tried to see him.

On I trudged the next day and sold my jacket at Chatham to a dreadful old man, who kept me waiting all day for the money, which was only one shilling and fourpence. I was afraid to buy anything but bread or to spend any money on a bed or a shelter for the night, and was terribly frightened by some rough tramps, who threw stones at me when I did not answer to their calls. After six days, I arrived at Dover, ragged, dusty, and half-dead with hunger and fatigue. But here, at first, I could get no tidings of my aunt, and, in despair, was going to try some of the other places Peggotty had mentioned, when the driver of a fly dropped his horsecloth, and as I was handing it up to him, I saw something kind in the man's face that encouraged me to ask if he knew where Miss Trotwood lived.

The man directed me toward some houses on the heights, and thither I toiled. Going into a little shop I inquired whether they would have the goodness to tell me where Miss Trotwood lived. I addressed myself to a man behind the counter, who was weighing some rice for a young woman; but the

latter, taking the inquiry to herself, turned round quickly.

"My mistress?" she said. "What do you want with her, boy?"

"I want," I replied, "to speak to her, if you please."

"To beg of her, you mean," retorted the damsel.

"No," I said, "indeed." But suddenly remembering that in truth I came for no other purpose, I held my peace in confusion, and felt my face burn.

My aunt's handmaid, as I supposed she was from what she had said, put her rice in a little basket and walked out of the shop; telling me that I could follow her, if I wanted to know where Miss Trotwood lived. I needed no second permission; though I was by this time in such a state of consternation and agitation, that my legs shook under me. I followed the young woman, and we soon came to a very neat little cottage with cheerful bow-windows; in front of it, a small, square, graveled court or garden full of flowers, carefully tended and smelling deliciously.

"This is Miss Trotwood's," said the young woman. "Now you know; and that's all I have got to say." With which words she hurried into the house, as if to shake off the responsibility of my appearance; and left me standing at the garden gate, looking disconsolately over the top of it toward the parlor window, where a muslin curtain, partly undrawn in the middle, a large round green

screen or fan fastened on to the window sill, a small table, and a great chair, suggested to me that my aunt might be at that moment seated in awful state.

My shoes were by this time in a woeful condition. The soles had shed themselves bit by bit, and the upper leathers had broken and burst, until the very shape and form of shoes had departed from them. My hat (which had served me for a nightcap, too) was so crushed and bent, that no old battered handleless saucepan on a dunghill need have been ashamed to vie with it. My shirt and trousers, stained with heat, dew, grass, and the Kentish soil on which I had slept, and torn besides, might have frightened the birds from my aunt's garden, as I stood at the gate. My hair had known no comb or brush since I left London. My face, neck, and hands, from unaccustomed exposure to the air and sun, were burned to a berry-brown. From head to foot I was powdered almost as white with chalk and dust as if I had come out of a limekiln. In this plight, and with a strong consciousness of it, I waited to introduce myself to, and make my first impression on, my formidable aunt.

The unbroken stillness of the parlor window leading me to infer, after a while, that she was not there, I lifted up my eyes to the window above it, where I saw a florid, pleasant-looking gentleman, with a gray head, who shut up one eye in a grotesque man-

ner, nodded his head at me several times, shook it at me as often, laughed, and went away.

I had been discomposed enough before; but I was so much the more discomposed by this unexpected behavior that I was on the point of slinking off, to think how I had best proceed, when there came out of the house a lady with a handkerchief tied over her cap, and a pair of gardening gloves on her hands, wearing a gardening pocket like a toilman's apron, and carrying a great knife. I knew her immediately to be Miss Betsey, for she came stalking out of the house exactly as my poor mother had so often described her stalking up our garden at Blunderstone Rookery.

"Go away!" said Miss Betsey, shaking her head, and making a distant chop in the air with her knife. "Go along! No boys here!"

I watched her, with my heart at my lips, as she marched to a corner of her garden, and stopped to dig up some little root there. Then, without a scrap of courage, but with a great deal of desperation, I went softly in and stood beside her, touching her with my finger.

"If you please, ma'am," I began.

She started, and looked up.

"If you please, aunt."

"Eh?" exclaimed Miss Betsey, in a tone of amazement I have never heard approached.

"If you please, aunt, I am your nephew."

"Oh, Lord!" said my aunt. And she sat flat down in the garden path.

"I am David Copperfield, of Blunderstone, in Suffolk, where you came, on the night when I was born, and saw my dear mamma. I have been very unhappy since she died. I have been slighted, and taught nothing, and thrown upon myself, and put to work not fit for me. It made me run away to you. I was robbed at first setting out, and have walked all the way, and have never slept in a bed since I began the journey." Here my self-support gave way all at once; and with a movement of my hands, intended to show her my ragged state, and call it to witness that I had suffered something, I broke into a passion of crying, which I suppose had been pent up within me all the week.

My aunt, with every sort of expression but wonder discharged from her countenance, sat on the gravel, staring at me, until I began to cry. Then she got up in a great hurry, collared me, and took me into the parlor. Her first proceeding there was to unlock a tall press, bring out several bottles, and pour some of the contents of each into my mouth. I think they must have been taken out at random, for I am sure I tasted aniseed water, anchovy sauce, and salad dressing. Then she put me on the sofa and sent the servant to ask Mr. Dick to come down. The gentleman whom I had seen at the window came in and was told by Miss Trotwood who the ragged

little object on the sofa was, and she finished by saying:

"Now here you see young David Copperfield, and the question is what shall I do with him?"

"Do with him?" answered Mr. Dick. Then, after some consideration, and looking at me, he said, "Well, if I was you I should wash him!"

Miss Trotwood was much pleased with this advice, and a warm bath was got ready at once, after which I was dressed in a shirt and trousers belonging to Mr. Dick (for Janet had burned my rags), rolled up in several shawls, and put on the sofa till dinner time, where I slept, and woke with the impression that my aunt had come and put my hair off my face, and murmured, "Pretty fellow, poor fellow."

After dinner I had to tell my story all over again to my aunt and Mr. Dick. Miss Trotwood again asked Mr. Dick's advice, and was delighted when that gentleman suggested I should be put to bed. I knelt down to say my prayers that night in a pleasant room facing the sea, and as I lay in the clean, snow-white bed I felt so grateful and comforted that I prayed earnestly I might never be homeless again, and might never forget the homeless.

The next morning my aunt told me she had written to Mr. Murdstone. I was alarmed to think that my stepfather knew where I was, and exclaimed:

"Oh, I don't know what I shall do if I have to go back to Mr. Murdstone!"

“We shall see,” said my aunt. My spirit sank under these words, and I became very downcast and heavy of heart.

Several anxious days went by, and at last Mr. and Miss Murdstone arrived. To Miss Betsey’s great indignation, Miss Murdstone rode a donkey across the green in front of the house, and stopped at the gate. Nothing made Miss Trotwood so angry as to see donkeys on that green, and I had already seen several battles between my aunt or Janet and the donkey boys.

After driving away the donkey and the boy who had dared to bring it there, Miss Trotwood received her visitors. She kept me near her, fenced in with a chair.

Mr. Murdstone told Miss Betsey that I was a very bad, stubborn, violent-tempered boy, whom he had tried without success to improve, and that he had put me in a respectable business from which I had run away. If Miss Trotwood chose to protect and encourage me now, she must do it always, for he had come to fetch me away there and then, and if I was not ready to come, and Miss Trotwood did not wish to give me up to be dealt with exactly as Mr. Murdstone liked, he would cast me off for always, and have no more to do with me.

“Are you ready to go, David?” asked my aunt.

But I answered no, and begged and prayed her for my father’s sake to befriend and protect me, for

neither Mr. nor Miss Murdstone had ever liked me or been kind to me and had made my mamma, who always loved me dearly, very unhappy about me, and I had been very miserable.

"Mr. Dick," said Miss Trotwood, "what shall I do with this child?"

Mr. Dick considered. "Have him measured for a suit of clothes directly."

"Mr. Dick," said Miss Trotwood, "your common sense is invaluable."

Then she pulled me toward her, and said to Mr. Murdstone:

"You can go when you like. I'll take my chance with the boy. If he's all you say he is, I can at least do as much for him as you have done. But I don't believe a word of it."

Then she told Mr. Murdstone what she thought of the way he had treated me and my mother, which did not make that gentleman feel very comfortable, and finished by turning to Miss Murdstone and saying:

"Good day to you, too, ma'am, and if I ever see you ride a donkey across my green again, as sure as you have a head upon your shoulders I'll knock your bonnet off and tread upon it!"

This startled Miss Murdstone so much that she went off quietly with her brother, while I, overjoyed, threw my arms round my aunt's neck, and kissed and thanked her with great heartiness.

Some clothes were bought for me that same day and marked "Trotwood Copperfield," for my aunt wished to call me by her name.

Thus I began my new life, in a new name, and with everything new about me. Now that the state of doubt was over, I felt, for many days, like one in a dream. I never thought that I had a curious couple of guardians in my aunt and Mr. Dick. I never thought of anything about myself, distinctly. The two things clearest in my mind were, that a remoteness had come upon the old Blunderstone life, which seemed to lie in the haze of an immeasurable distance; and that a curtain had forever fallen on my life at Murdstone & Grinby's. No one has ever raised that curtain since. I have lifted it for a moment, even in this narrative, with a reluctant hand, and dropped it gladly. The remembrance of that life is fraught with so much pain to me, with so much mental suffering and want of hope, that I have never had the courage even to examine how long I was doomed to lead it. Whether it lasted for a year, or more, or less, I do not know. I only know that it was, and ceased to be; and that I have written, and there I leave it.

—*David Copperfield*



Oliver asks Mr. Bumble for more



Bob Cratchit takes
Tiny Tim home—

